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FREDERICK *the* GREAT

G·A·HENTY

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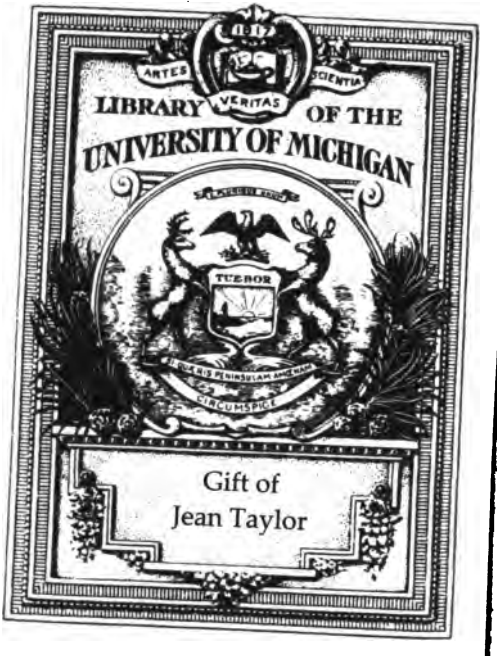
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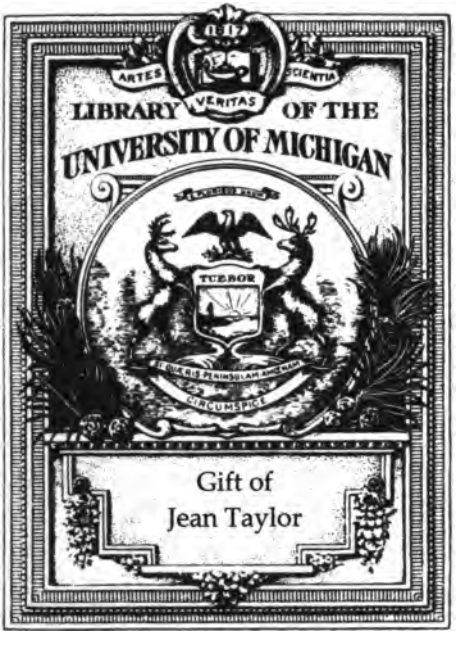
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WITH FREDERICK THE GREAT

"TWO OF THE NEW COMERS FIRED HASTILY,—AND BOTH MISSED"

WITH FREDERICK THE GREAT

A STORY OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

BY

G. A. HENTY

Author of "At Agincourt," "By England's Aid," "In Greek Waters," "One of the 28th," etc.

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY WAL PAGET

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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PREFACE

AMONG the great wars of history there are few, if any, instances of so long and successfully sustained a struggle against enormous odds as that of the Seven Years' War, maintained by Prussia—then a small and comparatively insignificant kingdom—against Russia, Austria, and France simultaneously, who were aided also by the forces of most of the minor principalities of Germany. The population of Prussia was not more than five millions, while that of the Allies considerably exceeded a hundred millions. Prussia could put with the greatest efforts but a hundred and fifty thousand men into the field, and as these were exhausted she had but small reserves to draw upon, while the Allies could, with comparatively little difficulty, put five hundred thousand men into the field and replenish them as there was occasion. That the struggle was successfully carried on for seven years was due chiefly to the military genius of the king, to his indomitable perseverance, and to a resolution that no disaster could shake, no situation, although apparently hopeless, appall.

Something was due also at the commencement of the war to the splendid discipline of the Prussian army at that time, but as comparatively few of those who fought at Lobositz could have stood in the ranks at Torgau, the quickness of the Prussian people to acquire military discipline must have been great, and this was aided by the perfect confidence they felt

in their king and the enthusiasm with which he inspired them. Although it was not, nominally, a war for religion, the consequences were as great and important as those which arose from the Thirty Years' War. Had Prussia been crushed and divided, Protestantism would have disappeared in Germany, and the whole course of subsequent events would have been changed.

The war was scarcely less important to Britain than to Prussia. Our close connection with Hanover brought us into the fray, and the weakening of France by her efforts against Prussia enabled us to wrest Canada from her, to crush her rising power in India, and to obtain that absolute supremacy at sea that we have never since lost. And yet, while every school-boy knows of the battles of ancient Greece, not one in a hundred has any knowledge whatever of the momentous struggle in Germany, or has ever as much as heard the names of the memorable battles of Rossbach, Leuthen, Prague, Zorndorf, Hochkirch, and Torgau. Carlyle's great work has done much to familiarize older readers with the story, but its bulk, its fulness of detail, and still more the peculiarity of Carlyle's diction and style, place it altogether out of the category of books that can be read and enjoyed by boys. I have therefore endeavoured to give the outlines of the struggle for their benefit, but regret that in a story so full of great events I have necessarily been obliged to devote a smaller share than usual to the doings of my hero.

G. A. HENTY.

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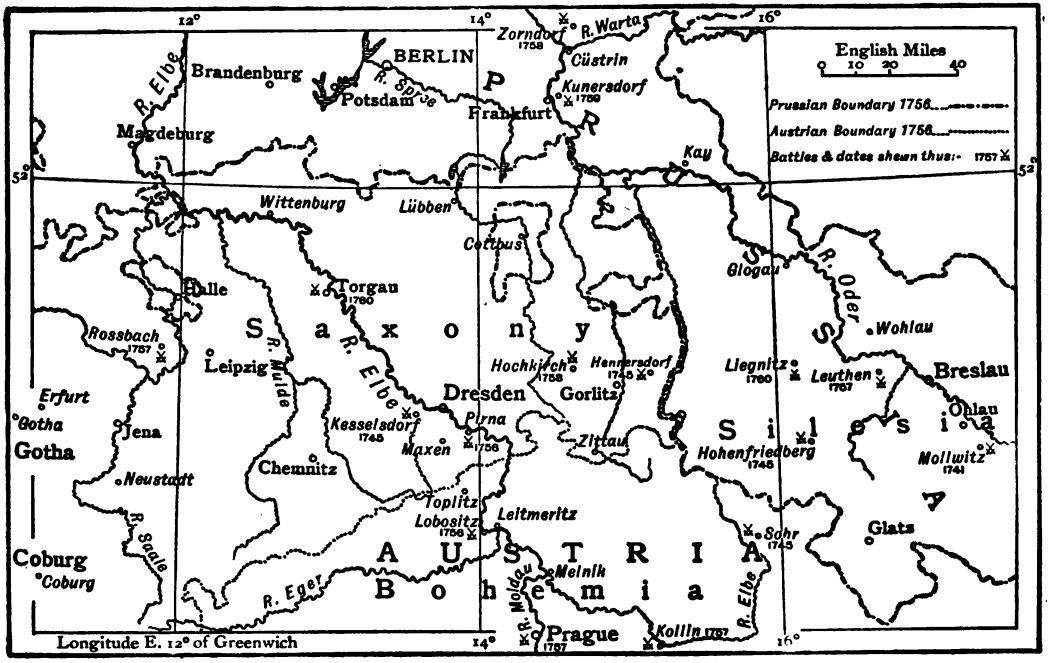


WITH FREDERICK THE GREAT

CHAPTER I

KING AND MARSHAL

IT was early in 1756 that a Scottish trader from Edinburgh entered the port of Stettin. Among the few passengers was a tall young Scotch lad, Fergus Drummond by name. Though scarcely sixteen, he stood five feet ten in height, and it was evident from his broad shoulders and sinewy appearance that his strength was in full proportion to his height. His father had fallen at Culloden ten years before; the glens had been harried by Cumberland's soldiers, and the estates confiscated. His mother had fled with him to the hills, and had lived there for some years in the cottage of a faithful clansman whose wife had been her nurse. Fortunately they were sufficiently well off to be able to maintain their guests in comfort, and indeed the presents of game, fish, and other matters frequently sent in by other members of the clan had enabled her to feel that her maintenance was no great burden on her faithful friends.

For some years she devoted herself to her son's education,

and then through the influence of friends at Court she obtained the grant of a small portion of her late husband's estates, and was able to live in comfort in a position more suited to her former rank. Fergus' life had been passed almost entirely in the open air. Accompanied by one or two companions, sons of the clansmen, he would start soon after daybreak and not return until sunset, when they would often bring back a deer from the forest or a heavy creel of salmon or trout from the streams. His mother encouraged him in these excursions and also in the practice of arms. She confined her lessons to the evening, and even after she settled on her recovered farm of Kilgowrie and obtained the services of a tutor for him, she arranged that he should still be permitted to pass the greater part of the day according to his own devices.

She herself was a cousin of the two brothers Keith, the one of whom, then Lord Marischal, had proclaimed the Old Pretender king at Edinburgh, and both of whom had attained very high rank abroad, the younger Keith having served with great distinction in the Spanish and Russian armies, and had then taken service under Frederick the Great, from whom he had received the rank of field-marshal, and was the king's greatest counsellor and friend. His brother had joined him there, and stood equally high in the king's favour. Although both were devoted Jacobites, and had risked all at the first rising in favour of the Old Pretender, neither had taken part in that of Charles Edward, seeing that it was doomed to failure.

After Culloden, James Keith, the field-marshal, had written to his cousin, Mrs. Drummond, as follows:

Dear Cousin:

I have heard with grief from Alexander Grahame, who has come over here to escape the troubles, of the grievous loss

that has befallen you. He tells me that when in hiding among the mountains he learned that you had, with your boy, taken refuge with Ian the forester, whom I well remember when I was last staying with your good husband, Sir John. He also said that your estates had been confiscated, but that he was sure you would be well cared for by your clansmen. Grahame told me that he stayed with you for a few hours while he was flying from Cumberland's bloodhounds, and that you told him you intended to remain there and to devote yourself to the boy's education until better times came.

I doubt not that erelong, when the hot blood that has been stirred up by this rising has cooled down somewhat, milder measures will be used and some mercy be shown; but it may be long, for the Hanoverian has been badly frightened and the Whigs throughout the country greatly scared, and this for the second time. I am no lover of the usurper, but I cannot agree with all that has been said about the severity of the punishment that has been dealt out. I have been fighting all over Europe, and I know of no country where a heavy reckoning would not have been made after so serious an insurrection. Men who take up arms against a king know that they are staking their lives; but after vengeance comes pardon and the desire to heal wounds, and I trust that you will get some portion of your estate again.

It is early yet to think of what you are going to make of the boy, but I am sure you will not want to see him fighting in the Hanoverian uniform. So, if he has a taste for adventure, let him, when the time comes, make his way out to me; or, if I should be under the sod by that time, let him go to my brother. There will, methinks, be no difficulty in finding out where we are, for there are so many Scotch abroad that news of us must often come home. However, from time to time I will write to you. Do not expect to hear too often, for I spend far more

time in the saddle than at my table, and my fingers are more accustomed to grasp a sword than a pen. However, be sure that wherever I may be, I shall be glad to see your son and to do my best for him. See that he is not brought up at your apron-string, but is well trained in all exercises, for we Scots have gained a great name for strength and muscle, and I would not that one of my kin should fall short of the mark.

Maggie Drummond had been much pleased with her kinsman's letter. There were few Scotchmen who stood higher in the regard of their countrymen, and the two Keiths had also a European reputation. Her husband and many other fiery spirits had expressed surprise and even indignation that the brothers, who had taken so prominent a part in the first rising, should not have hastened to join Prince Charlie, but the more thoughtful men felt it was a bad omen that they did not do so. It was certainly not from any want of adventurous spirit or of courage, for wherever adventures were to be obtained, wherever blows were most plentiful, James Keith and his brother were certain to be in the midst of them. But Maggie Drummond knew the reason for their holding aloof, for she had shortly before the coming over of Prince Charlie, received a short note from the field-marshal:

They say that Prince Charles Edward is meditating a mad scheme of crossing to Scotland and raising his standard there. If so, do what you can to prevent your husband from joining him. We made but a poor hand of it last time, and the chances of success are vastly smaller now. Then it was but a comparatively short time since the Stuarts had lost the throne of England, and there were great numbers who wished them back. Now the Hanoverian is very much more firmly seated on the throne. The present man has a considerable army, and the

troops have had experience of war on the Continent, and have shown themselves rare soldiers. Were not my brother Lord Marischal of Scotland, and my name somewhat widely known, I should not hang back from the adventure, however desperate, but our example might lead many who might otherwise stand aloof to take up arms, which would bring, I think, sure destruction upon them. Therefore we shall restrain our own inclinations, and shall watch what I feel sure will be a terrible tragedy from a distance, striking perhaps somewhat heavier blows than usual upon the heads of Turks, Moors, Frenchmen, and others, to make up for our not being able to use our swords where our inclinations would lead us.

The King of France will assuredly give no efficient aid to the Stuarts. He has all along used them as puppets, by whose means he can when he chooses annoy or coerce England. But I have no belief that he will render any useful aid either now or hereafter. Use then, cousin, all your influence to keep Drummond at home. Knowing him as I do, I have no great hope that it will avail, for I know that he is Jacobite to the backbone, and that if the prince lands he will be one of the first to join him.

Maggie had not carried out Keith's injunction. She had indeed told her husband, when she received the letter, that Keith believed the enterprise to be so hopeless a one that he should not join in it. But she was as ardent in the cause of the Stuarts as was her husband, and said no single word to deter him when, an hour after he heard the news of the prince's landing, he mounted and rode off to meet him and to assure him that he would bring every man of his following to the spot where his adherents were to assemble. From time to time his widow had continued to write to Keith, though, owing to his being continually engaged on campaigns against the Turks and

Tartars, he received but two or three of her letters so long as he remained in the service of Russia. When, however, he displeased the Empress Elizabeth, and at once left the service and entered that of Prussia, her letters again reached him.

The connection between France and Scotland had always been close, and French was a language familiar to most of the upper class; and since the civil troubles began such numbers of Scottish gentlemen were forced either to shelter in France or to take service in the French or other foreign armies, that a knowledge of the language became almost a matter of necessity. In one of his short letters Keith had told her that of all things it was necessary that the lad should speak French with perfect fluency, and master as much German as possible. And it was to these points that his education had been almost entirely directed. As to French there was no difficulty, and when she recovered a portion of the estate, Maggie Drummond was lucky in hearing of a Hanoverian trooper who, having been wounded and left behind in Glasgow, his term of service having expired, had on his recovery married the daughter of the woman who had nursed him.

He was earning a somewhat precarious living by giving lessons in the use of the rapier and in teaching German, and gladly accepted the offer to move out to Kilgowrie, where he was established in a cottage close to the house, where his wife aided in the housework. He became a companion of Fergus in his walks and rambles, and being an honest and pleasant fellow the lad took to him, and after a few months their conversation, at first somewhat disjointed, became easy and animated. He learned, too, much from him as to the use of his sword. The Scotch clansmen used their claymores chiefly for striking, but under Rudolph's tuition the lad came to be as apt with the point as he had before been with the edge, and fully recognized the great advantages of the former. By the time

he reached the age of sixteen his skill with the weapon was fully recognized by the young clansmen, who on occasions of festive gatherings sometimes came up to try their skill with the young laird.

From Rudolph too he came to know a great deal of the affairs of Europe, as to which he had hitherto been profoundly ignorant. He learned how, by the capture of the province of Silesia from the Empress of Austria, the King of Prussia had from a minor principality raised his country to a considerable power, and was regarded with hostility and jealousy by all his neighbours.

"But it is only a small territory now, Rudolph," Fergus said.

"'Tis small, Master Fergus, but the position is a very strong one. Silesia cannot well be invaded save by an army forcing its way through very formidable defiles, while, on the other hand, the Prussian forces can suddenly pour out into Saxony or Hanover. Prussia has perhaps the best drilled army in Europe, and though its numbers are small in proportion to those which Austria can put in the field, they are a compact force, while the Austrian army is made up of many peoples, and could not be gathered with the speed with which Frederick could place his force in the field. The king, too, is himself above all things a soldier. He has good generals, and his troops are devoted to him, though the discipline is terribly strict.

"It is a pity that he and the King of England are not good friends. They are natural allies, both countries being Protestant; and, to say the truth, we in Hanover should be well pleased to see them make common cause together, and should feel much more comfortable with Prussia as our friend than as a possible enemy. However, 'tis not likely that at present Prussia will turn her hand against us. I hear by letters from

home that it is said that the Empress of Russia as well as the Empress of Austria both hate Frederick, the latter because he has stolen Silesia from her, the former because he has openly said things about her such as a woman never forgives. Saxony and Poland are jealous of him, and France none too well disposed. So at present the King of Prussia is like to leave his neighbours alone, for he may need to draw his sword at any time in self-defence."

It was but a few days after this that Maggie Drummond received this short letter from her cousin, Marshal James Keith:

My Dear Cousin:

By your letter received a few days since I learned that Fergus is now nearly sixteen years old, and is, you say, as well grown and strong as many lads two or three years older. Therefore it is as well that you should send him off to me at once. There are signs in the air that we shall shortly have stirring times, and the sooner he is here the better. I would send money for his outfit, but as your letter tells me that you have by your economies saved a sum ample for this purpose I abstain from doing so. Let him come straight to Berlin, and inquire for me at the palace. I have a suite of apartments there, and he could not have a better time for entering upon military service, nor a better master than the king, who loves his Scotchmen, and under whom he is like to find opportunity to distinguish himself.

A week later Fergus started. It needed an heroic effort on the part of his mother to let him go from her, but she had all along recognized that it was for the best that he should leave her. That he should grow up as a petty laird, where his ancestors had been the owners of wide estates, and were powerful chiefs with a large following of clansmen and re-

tainers, was not to be thought of. Scotland offered few openings, especially to those belonging to Jacobite families, and it was therefore deemed the natural course for a young man of spirit to seek his fortune abroad, and from the days of the Union there was scarcely a foreign army that did not contain a considerable contingent of Scottish soldiers and officers.

They formed nearly a third of the army of Gustavus Adolphus, and the service of the Protestant princes of Germany had always been popular among them. Then her own cousin being a marshal in the Prussian army, it seemed to Mrs. Drummond almost a matter of course, when the time came, that Fergus should go to him, and she had for many years devoted herself to preparing the lad for that service. Nevertheless, now that the time had come, she felt the parting no less sorely; but she bore up well, and the sudden notice kept her fully occupied with preparations till the hour came for his departure. Two of the men rode with him as far as Leith, and saw him on board ship. Rudolph had volunteered to accompany him as servant, but his mother had said to the lad, "It would be better not, Fergus. Of course you will have a soldier servant there, and there might be difficulties in having a civilian with you." It was, however, arranged that Rudolph should become a member of the household. Being a handy fellow, a fair carpenter, and ready to turn his hand to anything, there would be no difficulty in making him useful about the farm.

Fergus had learnt from him the price at which he ought to be able to buy a useful horse, and his first step after landing at Stettin and taking up his quarters at an inn was to inquire the address of a horse-dealer. The latter found, somewhat to his surprise, that the young Scot was a fair judge of a horse and a close hand at driving a bargain, and when he left the lad had the satisfaction of knowing that he was the possessor of a ser-

viceable animal, and one which by his looks would do him no discredit. Three days later he rode into Berlin. He dismounted at a quiet inn, changed his travelling dress for the new one that he carried in his valise, and then, after inquiring for the palace, made his way there.

He was struck by the number of soldiers in the streets, and with the neatness, and indeed almost stiffness, of their uniform and bearing. Each man walked as if on parade, and the eye of the strictest martinet could not have detected a speck of dust on their equipment, or an ill-adjusted strap or buckle.

"I hope they do not brace and tie up their officers in that style," Fergus said to himself. He himself had always been accustomed to a loose and easy attire, suitable for mountain work, and the high cravats and stiff collars, powdered heads and pigtails, and tight-fitting garments, seemed to him the acme of discomfort. It was not long, however, before he came upon a group of officers, and saw that the military etiquette was no less strict in their case than in that of the soldiers, save that their collars were less high, and their stocks more easy. Their walk, too, was somewhat less automatic and machine-like, but they were certainly in strong contrast to the British officers he had seen on the occasion of his one or two visits to Perth. On reaching the palace and saying that he wished to see Marshal Keith, he was conducted by a soldier to his apartment, and on the former taking in the youth's name he was at once admitted. The marshal rose from his chair, came forward, and shook him heartily by the hand.

"So you are Fergus Drummond," he said, "the son of my cousin Maggie. Truly she lost no time in sending you off after she got my letter. I was afraid she might be long before she could bring herself to part from you."

"She had made up her mind to it so long, sir, that she was prepared for it; and, indeed, I think that she did her best to

hurry me off as soon as possible, not only because your letter was somewhat urgent, but because it gave her less time to think."

"That was right and sensible, lad, as indeed Maggie always was from a child. She did not speak too strongly about you, for indeed I should have taken you for fully two years older than you are. You have lost no time in growing, lad, and if you lose no more in climbing you will not be long before you are well up the tree. Now, sit you down and let me first hear all about your mother, and how she fares."

"In the first place, sir, she charged me to give you her love and affection, and to thank you for your good remembrance of her, and for writing to her so often when you must have had so many other matters on your mind."

"I was right glad when I heard that they had given her back Kilgowrie. It is but a corner of your father's lands, but I remember the old house well, going over there once when I was staying with your grandfather to see his mother who was then living there. How much land goes with it?"

"About a thousand acres, but the greater part is moor and mountain. Still, the land suffices for her to live on, seeing that she keeps up no show, and lives as quietly as if she had never known anything better."

"Aye, she was ever of a contented spirit. I mind her when she was a tiny child; if no one would play with her, she would sit by the hour talking with her dolls till someone could spare time to perch her on his shoulder and take her out."

Marshal Keith was a tall man, with a face thoughtful in repose, but having a pleasant smile and an eye that lit up with quiet humour when he spoke. He enjoyed the king's confidence to the fullest extent, and was regarded by him not only as a general in whose sagacity and skill he could entirely rely, but as one on whose opinion he could trust upon all political questions. He was his favourite companion when, as happened

not unfrequently, he donned a disguise and went about the town listening to the talk of the citizens and learning their opinions upon public affairs.

"I have spoken to the king about your coming, lad, and told him that you were a kinsman of mine.

"'Indeed, Marshal,' the king said, 'from what I can see it appears to me that all Scotchmen are more or less kin to each other.'

"'It is so to some extent, your Majesty. We Scotchmen pride ourselves on genealogy, and know every marriage that has taken place for ages past between the members of our family and those of others, and claim as kin even though very distant, all those who have any of our blood running in their veins; but in this case the kinship is close, the lad's mother being a first cousin of mine. His father was killed at Culloden, and I promised her, as soon as the news came to me, that when he had grown up strong and hearty he should join me wherever I might be and should have a chance of making his fortune by his sword.'

"'You say that he speaks both French and German well? It is more than I can do,' the king said with a laugh. 'German born and German king as I am, I get on but badly when I try my native tongue, for from a child I have spoken nothing but French. Still, it is well that he should know the language. In my case it matters but little, seeing that all my Court and all my generals speak French. But one who has to give orders to soldiers should be understood by them. Well, what do you want me to do for the lad?'

"'I propose to make him one of my own aides-de-camp,' I replied, 'and therefore I care not so much to what regiment he is appointed, though I own that I would far rather see him in the uniform of the guards than any other.'

"'You are modest, Marshal; but I observe that it is a

common fault among your countrymen. Well, which shall it be—infantry or cavalry?'

"'Cavalry, since you are good enough to give me the choice, sire. The uniform looks better for an aide-de-camp than that of the infantry.'

"'Very well, then, you may consider him gazetted as a cornet in my third regiment of Guards. You have no more kinsmen coming at present, Keith?'

"'No, sire; not at present.'

"'If many more come I shall form them into a separate regiment.'

"'Your Majesty might do worse,' I said.

"The king nodded. 'I wish I had half a dozen Scotch regiments; aye, a score or two. They were the cream of the army of Gustavus Adolphus, and if matters turn out as I fear they will, it would be a welcome reinforcement.'

"I will give you a note presently," continued the marshal, "to a man who makes my uniforms, so that I may present you to the king as soon as you are enrolled. You must remember that your favour or otherwise with him will depend very largely upon the fit of your uniform, and the manner in which you carry yourself. There is nothing so unpardonable in his eyes as a slovenly and ill-fitting dress. Everything must be correct to a nicety under all circumstances. Even during hot campaigns you must turn out in the morning as if you came from a band-box. I will get Colonel Grunow, who commands your regiment, to tell off an old trooper, one who is thoroughly up to his work, as your servant. I doubt not that he may be even able to find you a Scotchman, for there are many in the ranks—gentlemen who came over after Culloden, and hundreds of brave fellows who escaped Cumberland's harryings, by taking ship and coming over here, where, as they supposed, they would fight under a Protestant king."

"But the king is a Protestant, is he not, sir?"

"He is nominally a Protestant, Fergus. Absolutely, his Majesty has so many things to see about that he does not trouble himself greatly about religion. I should say that he was a disciple of Voltaire until Voltaire came here, when upon acquaintance he saw through the vanity of the little Frenchman, and has been much less enthusiastic about him since. By the way, how did you come here?"

"We heard of a ship sailing for Stettin, and that hurried my departure by some days. I made a good voyage there, and on landing bought a horse and rode here."

"Well, I am afraid your horse won't do to carry one of my aides-de-camp, so you had best dispose of it for what it will fetch. I will mount you myself. His Majesty was pleased to give me two horses the other day, and my stable is therefore overfull. Now, Fergus, we will drink a goblet of wine to your new appointment and success to your career."

"From what you said in your letter to my mother, sir, you think it likely that we shall see service before long?"

"Aye, lad, and desperate service, too. We have—but mind, this must go no further—sure news that Russia, Austria, France, and Saxony have formed a secret league against Prussia, and that they intend to crush us first, and then partition the kingdom among themselves. The Empress of Austria has shamelessly denied that any such treaty exists, but to-morrow morning a messenger will start with a demand from the king that the treaty shall be publicly acknowledged and then broken off, or that he will at once proclaim war. If we say nine days for the journey there, nine days to return, and three days waiting for the answer, you see that in three weeks from the present we may be on the move, for our only chance depends upon striking a heavy blow before they are ready. We

have not wasted our time; the king has already made an alliance with England."

"But England has no troops, or scarcely any," Fergus said.

"No, lad, but she has what is of quite as much importance in war—namely, money, and she can grant us a large subsidy. The king's interest in the matter is almost as great as ours. He is a Hanoverian more than an Englishman, and you may be sure that if Prussia were to be crushed, the allies would make but a single bite of Hanover. You see this will be a war of life and death to us, and the fighting will be hard and long."

"But what grievance has France against the king?"

"His Majesty is open spoken and no respecter of persons, and a woman may forgive an injury, but never a scornful gibe. It is this that has brought both France and Russia on him. Madame Pompadour, who is all-powerful, hates Frederick for having made disrespectful remarks concerning her; the Empress of Russia detests him for the same reason; she of Austria has a better cause, for she has never forgiven the loss of Silesia; and it is the enmity of these women as much as the desire to partition Prussia that is about to plunge Europe into a war to the full as terrible as that of the thirty years."

Keith now rung a bell, and a soldier entered. "Tell Lieutenant Lindsay that I wish to speak to him." A minute later an officer entered the room and saluted stiffly. "Lindsay, this is a young cousin of mine, Fergus Drummond. The king has appointed him to a cornetcy in the 3d Royal Dragoon Guards, but he is going to be one of my aides-de-camp. Now that things are beginning to move, you and Gordon will need help. Take him first to Tautz. I have written a note to the man telling him that he must hurry everything on. There is still a spare room on your corridor, is there not? Get your man to see his things bestowed there. I shall get his appointment

this evening, I expect, but it will be a day or two before he will be able to get a soldier from his regiment. He has a horse to sell, and various other matters to see to. At any rate, look after him till to-morrow. 'Tis my hour to go to the king."

Lindsay was a young man of two or three and twenty; he had a merry, joyous face, a fine figure, and a good carriage; but until he and Fergus were beyond the limits of the palace, he walked by the lad's side with scarce a word; when once past the entrance, however, he gave a sigh of relief.

"Now, Drummond," he said, "we will shake hands and begin to make each other's acquaintance. First, I am Nigel Lindsay, very much at your service. On duty I am another person altogether, scarcely recognizable even by myself—a sort of wooden machine, ready, when a button is touched, to bring my heels smartly together and my hands to the salute. There is something in the air that stiffens one's backbone and freezes one from the tip of one's toes to the end of one's pig-tail. When one is with the marshal alone, one thaws, for there is no better fellow living, and he chats to us as if we were on a mountain-side in Scotland instead of in Frederick's palace. But one is always being interrupted; either a general, or a colonel, or possibly the king himself comes in.

"For the time one becomes a military statue, and even when they go it is difficult to take up the talk as it was left. Oh, it is wearisome work, and heartily glad I shall be when the trumpets blow and we march out of Berlin. However, we are beginning to be pretty busy. I have been on horseback twelve hours a day on an average for the past week. Gordon started yesterday for Magdeburg, and Macgregor has been two days absent, but I don't know where; everyone is busy—from the king himself—who is always busy about something—to the youngest drummer. Nobody outside a small circle knows what it is all about. Apparently we are in a state of profound

peace, without a cloud in the sky, and yet the military preparations are going on actively everywhere.

"Convoys of provisions are being sent to the frontier fortresses, troops are in movement from the Northern Provinces. Drilling is going on—I was going to say night and day, for it is pretty nearly that—and no one can make out what it is all about. There is one thing, no one asks questions—his Majesty thinks for his subjects; and as he certainly is the cleverest man in his dominions, everyone is well content that it should be so. And now about yourself. I am running on and talking nonsense when I have all sorts of questions to ask you. But that is always the way with me. I am like a bottle of champagne corked down while I am in the palace, and directly I get away the cork flies out by itself, and for a minute or two it is all froth and emptiness. Now, when did you arrive, how did you arrive, what is the last news from Scotland, which of the branches of the Drummonds do you belong to, and how near of kin are you to the marshal? Oh, by the way, I ought to know the last without asking; as you are a Drummond and a relation of Keith, you can be no other than the son of the Drummond of Tarbet who married Margaret Ogilvie, who was a first cousin of Keith's."

"That is right," Fergus said. "My father fell at Culloden, you know. As to all your other questions they are answered easily enough. I know very little of the news in Scotland, for my mother lived a very secluded life at Kilgowrie, and little news came to us from without. I came from Leith to Stettin, and there I bought a horse and rode on here."

His companion laughed. "And how about yourself? I suppose you know nothing of this beastly language?"

"Yes; I can speak it pretty fluently, and of course know French."

"I congratulate you, though how you learnt it up in the

hills I know not. I did not know a word of it when I came out two years ago, and it is always on my mind; for, of course, I have a master who, when I am not otherwise engaged, comes to me for an hour a day, and well-nigh maddens me with his crack-jaw words; but I don't seem to make much progress. If I am sent with an order, and the officer to whom I take it does not understand French, I am floored. Of course I hand the order, if it is a written one, to him; if it is not, but just some verbal message asking him to call on the marshal at such and such a time, I generally make a horrible mess of it. He gets in a rage with me because he cannot understand me, I get in a rage with him for his dulness, and were it not that he generally manages to find some other officer who does understand French, the chances are very strongly against Keith's message being attended to. First of all, I will take you to our quarters. That is the house."

"Why, I thought you lodged in the palace?"

"Heaven forbid! Macgregor has a room in the chief's suite of apartments. He is senior aide-de-camp, and if there is any message to be sent late he takes it, but that is not often the case. Gordon lodges here with me. The house is a sort of branch establishment to the palace. Malcolm Menzies and Horace Farquhar, two junior aides of the king, are in the same corridor with us. Of course we make up a party by ourselves. Then there are ten or twelve German officers—some of them aides-de-camp of the Princes Maurice and Henry, the Prince of Bevern and General Schwerin—besides a score or so of palace officials.

"Fortunately the Scotch corridor, as we call it, has a separate entrance, so we can go in or out without disturbing anyone. It is a good thing, for in fact we and the Prussians do not get on very well together. They have a sort of jealousy of us, which is, I suppose, natural enough. Foreigners are never

favourites, and George's Hanoverian officers are not greatly loved in London. I expect a campaign will do good that way. They will see at any rate that we don't take our pay for nothing, and are ready to do a full share and more of fighting, while we shall find that these stiff pipe-clayed figures are brave fellows and good comrades when they get a little of the starch washed out of them. Now, this is my room, and I see my man has got dinner ready."

CHAPTER II

JOINING

IN answer to the shout of "Donald," a tall man in the pantaloons of a Prussian regiment, but with his tunic laid aside, came out from a small room that served as a kitchen and dormitory for himself.

"I am just ready, sir," he said; "hearing you talking as you came along, and not knowing who you might have with you, I just ran in to put on my coat; but as you passed and I heard it was Scottish you were speaking, I knew that it didna matter."

"Put another plate and goblet on the table, Donald. I hope that you have meat enough for two of us."

"Plenty for four," the soldier said. "The market was full this morning, and the folk so ta'en up wi' this talk of war, and so puzzled because no one could mak' out what it was about, that they did more gossiping than marketing. So when the time came for the market to close, I got half a young pig at less than I should hae paid for a joint, as the woman did not want to carry it home again."

"That is lucky. As you are from Perth, Donald, it is possible you may know this gentleman. He is Mr. Fergus Drummond of Tarbet."

"I kenned his father weel, aye, and was close beside him at Culloden, for when our company was broken I joined one that was making a stand close by, and it was Drummond who was leading it. Stoutly did we fight, and to the end stood back to back, hewing with our claymores at their muskets. At last I fell wounded, I couldna say where at the time. When I came to myself, and finding that all was quiet, sat up and felt myself over, I found that it was a musket bullet that had ploughed along the top of my head, and would ha' killed me had it not been that my skull was, as my father had often said when I was a boy, thicker than ordinary. There were dead men lying all about me; but it was a dark night, and as there was no time to be lost if I was to save my skin, I crawled away to some distance from the field and then took to my heels, and did not stop till next morning, when I was far away among the hills."

While he was talking, Donald had been occupied in adding a second plate and knife and fork and glass, and the two officers sat down to their meal. Fergus asked the soldier other questions as to the fight in which his father had lost his life; for beyond that he had fought to the last with his face to the foe, the lad had never learnt any particulars, for of the clansmen who had accompanied his father not one had ever returned.

"Mr. Drummond will take the empty room next to mine, Donald. I am going down now with him to the inn where he has left his horse. As he has a few things there, you had best come with us and bring them here."

The landlord of the inn, on hearing that Fergus wished to sell his horse, said that there were two travellers in the house who had asked him about horses, as both had sold to officers

fine animals they had brought in from the country, there being at present a great demand for horses of that class. One of these persons came in as they were speaking, and after a little bargaining Fergus sold the horse to him at a small advance on the price he had given for it at Stettin. The landlord himself bought the saddle and bridle for a few marks, saying that he could at any time find a customer for such matters. Donald took the valises and cloak and carried them back to the palace.

"That matter is all comfortably settled," Lindsay said. "Now we are free men, but my liberty won't last long. I shall have to go on duty again in half an hour. But, at any rate, there is time to go first with you to the tailor's and put your uniform in hand."

"I wish to be measured for the uniform of the 3rd Royal Dragoon Guards," Fergus said as he entered the shop and the proprietor came up to him.

"Yes, Herr Tautz; and his excellency Marshal Keith," Lindsay put in, "wishes you to know that the dress suit must be made instantly, or quicker if possible, for his majesty may at any moment order Mr. Drummond to attend upon him. Mr. Drummond is appointed one of the marshal's aides-de-camp, and as therefore he will often come under the king's eye you may well believe that the fit must be of the best, or you are likely to hear of it as well as Mr. Drummond."

"I will put it in hand at once, lieutenant. It shall be cut out without delay, and in three hours if Mr. Drummond will call here it shall be tacked together in readiness for the first trying-on. By eight o'clock to-morrow morning it shall be ready to be properly fitted, and unless my men have bungled, which they very seldom do, it shall be delivered by mid-day."

"Mr. Drummond lodges in the next room to myself," the lieutenant said; "and my servant is looking after him till he gets one of his own, so you can leave it with him."

While the conversation was going on two of the assistants were measuring Fergus. "Will you have the uniform complete, with belts, helmet, and all equipments?"

"Everything except the sword," Fergus said. "At least I suppose, Lindsay, we can carry our own swords."

"Yes, the king has made that concession, which is a wonderful one for him, that Scottish officers in his service may carry their own swords. You see ours are longer and straighter than the German ones, and most of us have learnt our exercises with them, and certainly we would not fight so well with others; besides, the iron basket protects one's hand and wrist vastly better than the foreign guard. The concession was first made only to generals, field officers and aides-de-camp, but Keith persuaded the king at last to grant it to all Scottish officers, pointing out that they were able to do much better service with their own claymores than with weapons to which they were altogether unaccustomed, and that Scottish men were accustomed to fight with the edge and to strike downright sweeping blows, whereas the swords here are fitted only for the point, which, although doubtless superior in a duel, is far less effective in a general mêlée."

"I should certainly be sorry to give up my own sword," Fergus said; "it was one of my father's, and since the days when I was big enough to begin to use it, I have always exercised myself with it, though I, too, have learned to use the point a great deal, as I had a German instructor as well as several Scottish ones."

"Except in a duel," Lindsay said, "I should doubt if skill goes for very much. I have never tried it myself, for I have never had the luck to be in battle; but I fancy that in a cavalry charge strength goes for more than skill, and the man who can strike quickly and heavily will do more execution than one trained to all sorts of nice points and feints. I grant that

these are useful when two men are watching each other; but in the heat of a battle, when every one is cutting and thrusting for his life, I cannot think that there is any time for fooling about with your weapon."

They had by this time left the shop, and were strolling down the streets.

"Is there much duelling here?"

"It is strictly forbidden," Lindsay said, with a laugh; "but I need hardly say that there is a good deal of it. Of course, pains are taken that these affairs do not come to his majesty's ears. Fever, or a fall from a horse, account satisfactorily enough for the absence of an officer from parade, and even his total disappearance from the scene can be similarly explained. Should the affair come to the king's ears, 'tis best to keep out of his way until it has blown over. Of course, with us it does not matter quite so much as with Prussian officers. Frederick's is not the only service open to us. Good swords are welcome either at the Russian or Austrian courts, to say nothing of those of half a dozen minor principalities.

"At all of these we are sure to find countrymen and friends, and if England really enters upon the struggle—and it seems to me that if there is a general row she can scarcely stand aloof—men who have learned their drill and seen some service might be welcomed, even if their fathers wielded their arms on the losing side ten years ago. Of course, to a Prussian officer it would be practical ruin to be dismissed from the army. This is so thoroughly well understood that in cases of duels there is a sort of general conspiracy on the part of all the officers and surgeons of a regiment to hush the matter up. Still, if an officer is insulted, or thinks that he is insulted, which is about the same thing, he fights, and takes the consequences. I am not altogether sorry that I am an aide-de-camp, and I think that you can congratulate yourself on the same fact, for we are

not thrown, as is a regimental officer, into the company of Prussians, and there is therefore far less risk of getting into a quarrel.

"I have no doubt the marshal himself will give you a few lessons shortly. He is considered to be one of the finest swordsmen in Europe, and in many respects he is as young as I am, and as fond of adventure. He gave me a few when I first came to him, but he said that it was time thrown away, for that I must put myself in the hands of some good *maître d'armes* before he could teach me anything that would be useful. I have been working hard with one since, and know a good deal more about it than I did, but my teacher says that I am too hot and impetuous to make a good swordsman, and that though I should do well enough in a mêlée, I shall never be able to stand up against a cool man in a duel. Of course the marshal had no idea of teaching me arms, but merely, as he said, of showing me a few passes that might be useful to me on occasion. In reality, he loves to keep up his sword-play, and once or twice a week, Van Bruff, who is the best master in Berlin, comes in for half an hour's practice with him before breakfast."

After Lindsay had left him at the entrance to the palace, Fergus wandered about the town for some hours, and then went to the tailor's and had his uniform tried on. Merely run together though it was, the coat fitted admirably.

"You are an easy figure to fit, Herr Drummond," the tailor said. "There is no credit in putting together a coat for you. Your breeches are a little too tight—you have a much more powerful leg than is common—but that, however, is easily altered. Here are a dozen pairs of high boots. I noticed the size of your foot, and have no doubt that you will find some of these to fit you."

This was indeed the case, and among a similar collection of helmets Fergus also had no difficulty in suiting himself.

"I think that you will find everything ready for you by half-past eight," the tailor said, "and I trust that no further alteration will be required. Six of my best journeymen will work all night at the clothes, and even should his majesty send for you by ten, I trust that you will be able to make a proper appearance before him, though at present I cannot guarantee that some trifling alteration will not be found necessary when you try the uniforms on."

Fergus supped with the marshal, who had now time to ask him many more questions about his home life, and the state of things in Scotland.

"'Tis a sore pity," he said, "that we Scotchmen and Irishmen, who are to be found in such numbers in every European army, are not all arrayed under the flag of our country. Methinks that the time is not far distant when it will be so. I am, as you know, a Jacobite; but there is no shutting one's eyes to the fact that the Cause is a lost one. The expedition of James the Third, and still more that of Charles Edward, have caused such wide-spread misery among the Stuarts' friends that I cannot conceive that any further attempt of the same kind will be made—in fact, there is no one to make it. The prince has lost almost all his friends by his drunken habits and his quarrelsome and overbearing disposition. He has gone from court to court as a suppliant, but has everywhere alienated the sympathies of those most willing to befriend him.

"I may say that as a King of England and Scotland he is now impossible, and his own habits have done more to ruin his cause than even the defeat of Culloden. There are doubtless many in both countries who consider themselves Jacobites, but it is a matter of sentiment and not of passion. At any rate there is no head to the cause now, and cannot possibly be unless the prince had a son; therefore, for at

least five-and-twenty years, the cause is dead. Even if the prince leaves an heir, it would be absurd to entertain the idea that after the Stuarts have been expelled from England a hundred years, any Scotchman or Englishman would be mad enough to risk life and property to restore them to the throne.

"Another generation and the Hanoverians will have become Englishmen, and the sentiment against them as foreigners will have died out. Then there will be no reason why Scotchmen and Irishmen should any longer go abroad, and all who wish it will be able to find employment in the army of their own country. This, indeed, might have happened long before this had the Georges forgotten that they were Electors of Hanover as well as Kings of Great Britain, and had surrounded themselves with Englishmen, instead of filling their courts with Germans, whose arrogance and greed made them hateful to Englishmen, and kept before their eyes the fact that their kings were foreigners. Hanover is a source of weakness instead of strength to Great Britain, and its loss would be an unmixed benefit to her, for as long as it remains under the British crown, so long must Britain play a part in European politics—a part, too, sometimes absolutely opposed to the interests of the country at large."

After supper was over two general officers dropped in for a chat with the marshal. He introduced Fergus to them, and the latter then retired and joined the little party of Scottish officers at Lindsay's quarters. Lindsay introduced him to them, and he was very heartily received; and it was not until very late that they turned into bed. At half-past eight next morning Fergus went to the tailor's, and found that he had kept his promise to the letter. The uniforms fitted admirably, and were complete in every particular. As Marshal Keith had the evening before informed him that he had received his appointment to the 3rd Royal Dragoon Guards, he had no

hesitation in putting on a uniform when, a quarter of an hour later, it arrived at his quarters.

Donald went out and fetched a hair-dresser, who combed, powdered, and tied up his hair in proper military fashion. When he left Donald took him in hand, attired him in his uniform, showed him the exact angle at which his belt should be worn, and the military salute that should be given. It was fortunate that he was in readiness, for at half-past ten Lindsay came in with a message from the marshal that he was at once to repair to the palace, with or without a uniform, as the king had sent to say that he should visit Keith at eleven, and that he could then present his cousin to him. It could not be said that Fergus felt comfortable as he started from his quarters. Accustomed to a loose dress and light shoes, he felt stiff and awkward in his tight garments closely buttoned up and his heavy jack-boots, and he found himself constrained to walk with the same stiffness and precision that had amused him in the Prussian officers on the previous day.

"So you have got your uniform," the marshal said, as Fergus entered and saluted, as Donald had instructed him. "It becomes you well, lad, and the king will be pleased at seeing you in it. He could not have blamed you had it not been ready, for the time has been short indeed; but he will like to see you in it, and will consider that it shows alacrity and zeal."

Presently the door opened, and as the marshal rose and saluted, Fergus knew that it was the king. He had never had the king described to him, and had depicted to himself a stiff and somewhat austere figure, but the new-comer was somewhat below middle height, with a kindly face, and the air rather of a sober citizen than of a military martinet. The remarkable feature of his face were his eyes, which were very large and blue, with a quick piercing glance that seemed to

read the mind of anyone to whom he addressed himself. So striking were they that the king, when he went about the town in disguise, was always obliged to keep his eyes somewhat downcast, as, however well made up, they would have betrayed him at once had he looked fixedly at anyone who had once caught sight of his face.

"Good-morning, marshal," he said, in a friendly tone. "So this is my last recruit—a goodly young fellow, truly."

He walked round Fergus as if he were examining a lay figure, closely scrutinizing every article of his appointment, and then gave a nod of approbation.

"Always keep yourself like that, young sir; an officer is unfit to take charge of men unless he can set an example of exactness in dress. If a man is precise in little things he will be careful in other matters. Although he is going to be your aide-de-camp, Keith, he had better go to his regimental barracks and drill for a few hours a day if you can spare him."

"He shall certainly do so, sire. I spoke to his colonel yesterday evening, and told him that I would myself take the lad down to him this morning and present him to his comrades of the regiment. It would be well if he could have six months' drilling, for an aide-de-camp should be well acquainted with the meaning of the orders he carries, as he is in that case far less likely to make mistakes than he would otherwise be. Your majesty has nothing more to say to him?"

"Nothing. I hope he is not quarrelsome. But there, it is of no use my hoping that, Keith, for your Scotchman is a quarrelsome creature by nature, at least so it seems to me. Of the duels that, in spite of my orders, take place—I know you all try to hide them from me, Keith—I hear of a good many between these hot-headed countrymen of yours and my Prussian officers."

"With deference to your majesty, I don't think that that

"THE KING WALKED ROUND FERGUS AS IF HE WERE EXAMINING A LAY FIGURE"

proves much. It would be as fair to say that these duels show how aggressive are your Prussian officers towards my quiet and patient countrymen. Now you can retire, Cornet."

Fergus gave the military salute and retired to the anteroom.

"Have you passed muster?" Lindsay asked with a laugh.

"Yes; at least the king found nothing wrong. He was not at all what I thought he would be."

"No; I was astonished myself the first time I saw him. He is a capital fellow, in spite of his severity in matters of military etiquette and discipline. He is very kind-hearted, does not stand at all upon his dignity, bears no malice, and very soon remits punishment he has given in the heat of the moment. I think that he regards us Scots as being a people for whom allowances must be made, on the ground of our inborn savagery and ignorance of civilized customs. He does not mind plain-speaking on our part, and if in the humour will talk with us much more familiarly than he would do to a Prussian officer."

In a few minutes the bell in the next room sounded. Lindsay went in.

"Are the horses at the door?"

"Yes, Marshal."

"Then we will mount at once. I told the colonel of the 3d that I should be at the barracks by twelve o'clock, unless the king wanted me on his business."

Fergus had already put on his helmet, and he and Lindsay followed Keith downstairs. In the courtyard were the horses, which were held by orderlies.

"That is yours, Fergus," Keith said. "It has plenty of bone and blood, and should carry you well for any distance."

Fergus warmly thanked the marshal for the gift. It was a very fine horse, and capable of carrying double his weight. It

was fully caparisoned with military bridle and saddle and horse-cloth. They mounted at once. The orderlies ran to their horses, which were held by a mounted trooper, and the four fell in behind the officers. Lindsay and Fergus rode half a length behind the marshal, but the latter had some difficulty in keeping his horse in that position.

The marshal smiled. "It does not understand playing second fiddle, Fergus; you see it has been accustomed to head the procession."

As they rode along through the street all officers and soldiers stood as stiff as statues at the salute, the marshal returning it as punctiliously, though not as stiffly. In a quarter of an hour they arrived at the gate of a large barracks. The guard turned out as soon as the marshal was seen approaching, and a trumpet-call was heard in the courtyard as they entered the gate. Fergus was struck with the spectacle, the like of which he had never seen before. The whole regiment was drawn up in parade order. The colonel was some distance in the front, the officers ranged at intervals behind him. Suddenly the colonel raised his sword above his head, a flash of steel ran along the line, eight trumpeters sounded the first note of a military air, and the regiment stood at the salute, men and horses immovable, as if carved in stone. A minute later the music stopped, the colonel raised his sword again, there was another flash of steel, and the salute was over. Then the colonel rode forward to meet the marshal.

"Nothing could have been better, my dear Colonel," the latter said. "As I told you yesterday, my inspection of your regiment is but a mere form, for I know well that nothing could be more perfect than its order, but I must report to the king that I have inspected all the regiments now in Berlin and Potsdam, and others that will form my command, should any untoward event disturb the peace of the country. But before

I begin permit me to present to you this young officer, who was yesterday appointed to your regiment. I have already spoken to you of him. This is Cornet Fergus Drummond, a cousin of my own, and whom I recommend strongly to you. As I informed you, he will for the present act as one of my aides-de-camp."

"You have lost no time in getting your uniform, Mr. Drummond," the colonel said. "I am sure that you will be most cordially received by all my officers, as by myself, as a relation of the marshal, whom we all respect and love."

"I will now proceed to the inspection," the marshal said, and he proceeded towards the end of the line. The colonel rode beside him, but a little behind, the two aides-de-camp followed, and the four troopers brought up the rear. They proceeded along the front rank, the officers having before this taken up their position in the line. The marshal looked closely at each man as he passed, horse as well as man being inspected.

"I do not think, Colonel, that the king himself could have discovered the slightest fault or blemish; the regiment is simply perfect. I hope that during the next few days you will have every shoe inspected by the farrier, and every one showing the least signs of wear taken off and replaced, and that you will also direct the captains of troops to see that the men's kits are in perfect order."

"That shall be done, sir, though I own that I cannot see against whom we are likely to march, for though the air is full of rumours, all our neighbours seem to think of nothing so little as war."

"It may be," Keith said, with a smile, "that it is merely his Majesty's intention to see in how short a time we can place an army, complete in every particular and ready for a campaign, in the field. His Majesty is fond of trying military experiments."

"I hope, Marshal, that you will do us the honour of drinking a goblet of champagne with us. Some of my officers have not yet been presented to you, and I shall be glad to take the opportunity of doing so."

"With pleasure, Colonel. A good offer should never be refused."

By this time they had moved to the front of the regiment.

"Officers and men of the 3d Royal Dragoon Guards," Keith said, in a loud voice, "I shall have great pleasure in reporting to the king the result of my inspection, that the regiment is in a state of perfect efficiency, and that I have been unable to detect the smallest irregularity or blemish. I am quite sure that if you should at any time be called upon to fight the enemies of your country, you will show that your conduct and courage will be fully equal to the excellence of your appearance. I feel that whatever men can do you will do. God save the king."

He lifted his plumed hat, the trumpet sounded, the men gave the royal salute, and then a loud cheer burst from the ranks, for the rumours current had raised a feeling of excitement throughout the regiment, and though no man could see from what point danger threatened, all felt that great events were at hand.

The regiment was then dismissed, hoarse words of command were shouted, and each troop moved off to its stable, while the colonel and Keith rode to the officers' ante-room, the trumpets at the same time sounding the officers' call. In a few minutes all were gathered there. The colonel first presented some of his young officers to the marshal, and then introduced Fergus to his new comrades, among whom were two Scotch officers.

"Mr. Drummond will for the present serve with the marshal as one of his aides-de-camp, but I hope that he will soon

join the regiment, where at any rate he will at all times find a warm welcome."

Keith had already told the colonel that for the present Fergus would be released from all duty as an aide-de-camp, and would spend his time in acquiring the rudiments of drill. Champagne was now served round. The officers drank the health of the marshal, and he in return drank to the regiment; then all formality was laid aside for a time, and the marshal laughed and chatted with the officers as if he had been one of themselves. Fergus was surrounded by a group, who were all pleased at finding that he could already talk the language fluently, and in spite of the jealousy of the Scottish officers felt throughout the service, the impression that he made was a very favourable one, and the hostility of race was softened by the fact that he was a near relation of the marshal, who was universally popular. He won favour, too, by saying, when the colonel asked whether he would rather have a Scottish or a Prussian trooper assigned to him as servant and orderly, that he would choose one of the latter. After speaking to the adjutant, the colonel gave an order, and two minutes later a tall and powerful trooper entered the room and saluted. The adjutant went up to him.

"Karl Hoger," he said, "you are appointed orderly and servant to Mr. Fergus Drummond. He is quartered at the officers' house facing the palace. You will take your horse round there and await his arrival. He will show you where it is to be stabled. You are released from all regimental duty until further orders."

The man saluted and retired without the slightest change of face to show whether the appointment was agreeable to him or otherwise. Half an hour later the marshal mounted, and with his party rode back to the palace. After he had dismounted, Lindsay and Fergus rode across to their quarters.

Karl Hoger was standing at the entrance holding his horse. He saluted as the two officers came up.

"I will go in and see if dinner is ready," Lindsay said. "I told Donald that we should be back at half-past one, and it is nearly two now, and I am as hungry as a hunter."

Fergus led the way to the stable, and pointed out to the trooper the two stalls that the horses were to occupy, for each room in the officers' quarters had two stalls attached to it, the one for the occupant, the other for his orderly.

"I suppose you have not dined yet, Karl?"

"No, sir, but that does not matter."

"I don't want you to begin by fasting. Here are a couple of marks. When you have stabled the horses and finished here you had better go out and get yourself dinner. I shall not be able to draw rations for you for to-day. After you have done come to the main entrance where I met you and take the first corridor to the left; mine is the fifth door on the right-hand side. If I am not in, knock at the next door to it on this side; you will see Lieutenant Lindsay's name on it. You need not be in any hurry over your meal, for I am just going to have dinner, and certainly shall not want you for an hour."

On reaching Lindsay's quarters Fergus found that dinner was waiting, and he and Lindsay lost no time in attacking a fine fish that Donald had bought in the market.

"That is a fine regiment of yours, Drummond," Lindsay said.

"Magnificent. Of course I never saw anything like it before, but it was certainly splendid."

"Yes. They distinguished themselves in the campaigns of Silesia very much. Their colonel, Grün, is a capital officer—very strict, but a really good fellow, and very much liked by his officers. However, if I were you, I should be in no

hurry to join. I had two years and a half in an infantry regiment before Keith appointed me one of his aides-de-camp, and I can tell you it was hard work—drill from morning till night. We were stationed at a miserable country place, without any amusements or anything to do, and as at that time there did not seem the most remote chance of active service, it was a dog's life. Everyone was surly and ill-tempered, and I had to fight two duels."

"What about?"

"About nothing, as far as I could see. A man said something about Scotch officers in a tone I did not like. I was out of temper, and instead of turning it off with a laugh I took it up seriously, and threw a glass at his head. So, of course, we fought. We wounded each other twice, and then the others stopped it. The second affair was just as absurd, except that there I got the best of it, and sliced the man's sword-arm so deeply that he was on the sick-list for two months, the result of an accident, as the surgeon put it down. So, although I don't say but that there is a much better class of men in the 3d than there was in my regiment, I should not be in any hurry to join."

"If there is a row you will see ten times as much as an aide-de-camp as you would in your regiment, while during peace-time there is no comparison at all between our lives as aides-de-camp and that of regimental officers. I fancy you have rather a treasure in the man they have told off to you. He was the colonel's servant at one time, but he got drunk one day, and of course the colonel had to send him back to the ranks. One of the officers told me about him when he came in, and said that he was one of the best riders and swordsmen in the regiment. The adjutant told me that he has specially chosen him for you because he had a particularly good mount, and that as your orderly it would be of great im-

portance that he should be able to keep up with you. Of course he got the horse when he was the colonel's orderly, and though he was sent back to the ranks six months ago, the colonel, who was really fond of the man, allowed him to keep it."

"I thought it seemed an uncommonly good animal when he led it into the stable," Fergus said—"plenty of bone and splendid quarters. I hope he was not unwilling to come to me. It is a great fall from being a colonel's servant to become a cornet's."

"I don't suppose he will mind that; and at any rate while he is here the berth will be such an easy one that I have no doubt he will be well content with it, and I daresay that he and Donald will get on well together. Donald is a Cuirassier. After Keith appointed me as one of his aides he got me transferred to the Cuirassiers, who are stationed at Potsdam. That was how I came to get hold of Donald as a servant."

A few minutes after they had done dinner there was a knock at the door. The orderly entered and saluted.

"You will find my man in there," Lindsay said. "At present Mr. Drummond and I are living together. I daresay you and he will get on very comfortably."

For the next fortnight Fergus spent the whole day in barracks. He was not put through the usual preliminary work, but the colonel, understanding what would be most useful to him, had him instructed in the words of command necessary for carrying out simple movements, his place as cornet with a troop when in line or column; and being quick, intelligent, and anxious to learn, Fergus soon begun to feel himself at home.

CHAPTER III

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

AS Lindsay had predicted, the marshal had, on the evening of the day Fergus joined his regiment, said to him:

"I generally have half an hour's fencing the first thing of a morning, Fergus. It is good exercise, and keeps one's muscles lissome. Come round to my room at six. I should like to see what the instructors at home have done for you, and I may be able to put you up to a few tricks of the sword that may be of use to you if you are ever called upon to break his Majesty's edicts against duelling."

Fergus, of course, kept the appointment.

"Very good; very good indeed," the marshal said after the first rally. "You have made the most of your opportunities. Your wrist is strong and supple, your eye quick. You are a match now for most men who have not worked hard in a school of arms. Like almost all our countrymen you lack precision. Now let us try again."

For a few minutes Fergus exerted himself to the utmost, but failed to get his point past the marshal's guard. He had never seen fencing like this. Keith's point seemed to be ever threatening him. The circles that were described were so small that the blade seemed scarcely to move, and yet every thrust was put aside by a slight movement of the wrist, and he felt that he was at his opponent's mercy the whole time. Presently there was a slight jerk, and on the instant his weapon was twisted from his hand and sent flying across the room.

Keith smiled at his look of bewilderment. "You see you have much to learn, Fergus."

"I have indeed, sir. I thought that I knew something about fencing, but I see that I know nothing at all."

"That is going too far the other way, lad. You know, for example, a vast deal more than Lindsay did when he came to me six months ago. I fancy you know more than he does now or ever will know, for he still pins his faith on the utility of a slashing blow, as if the sabre had a chance against a rapier in the hands of a skilful man. However, I will give you a lesson every morning, and I should advise you to go to Van Bruff every evening. I will give you a note to him. He is by far the best master we have. Indeed, he is the best in Europe. I will tell him that the time at your disposal is too short for you to attempt to become a thorough swordsman, but that you wish to devote yourself to learning a few thrusts and parries, such as will be useful in a duel, thoroughly and perfectly. I myself will teach you that trick I played on you just now, and two others like it, and I think it possible that in a short time you will be able to hold your own even against men who may know a good deal more of the principles and general practice of the art than yourself."

Armed with a note from the marshal, Fergus went the next day to the famous professor. The latter read the letter through carefully, and then said:

"I should be very glad to oblige the marshal, for whom I have the highest respect, and whom I regard as the best swordsman in Europe. I often practise with him and always come away having learned something. Moreover, the terms he offers for me to give you an hour and a half's instruction every evening are more than liberal. But every moment of my time in the evening is occupied from five to ten. Could you come at that hour?"

"Certainly I could, professor."

"Then so be it. Come at ten punctually. My school

is closed at that hour, but you will find me ready for you."

Accordingly, during the next three weeks Fergus worked from ten till half-past eleven with Herr Van Bruff, and from six till half-past with the marshal. His mountain training was useful indeed to him now, for the day's work in the barrack was in itself hard and fatiguing, and tough as his muscles were, his wrist at first ached so at nights that he had to hold it for some time under a tap of cold water to allay the pain. At the end of a week, however, it hardened again, and he was sustained by the commendations of his two teachers, and the satisfaction he felt in the skill he was acquiring.

"Where is your new aide-de-camp, Marshal?" the king asked one evening. It was the close of one of his receptions. "As a rule these young fellows are fond of showing off in their uniforms at first."

"He is better employed, sire. He has the makings of a very fine swordsman, and having some reputation myself that way, I should be glad that my young cousin should be able to hold his own well when we get to blows with the enemy. So I and Van Bruff have taken him in hand, and for the last three weeks he has made such progress that this morning when we had open play it put me on my mettle to hold my own. So what with that and his regimental work his hands are more than full; and indeed, he could not get through it had he to attend here in the evening, and I know that as soon as he has finished his supper he turns in for a sound sleep till he is woke in time to dress and get to the fencing-school at ten. Had there been a longer time to spare, I would not have suffered him to work so hard, but seeing that in a few days we may be on the march to the frontier, we have to make the most of the time."

"He has done well, Keith, and his zeal shows that he will

make a good soldier. Yes, another three days and our messenger should return from Vienna, and the next morning, unless the reply is satisfactory, the troops will be on the move. After that, who knows?"

During the last few days the vague rumours that had been circulating had gained strength and consistency. Every day fresh regiments arrived and encamped near the city, and there were reports that a great concentration of troops was taking place at Halle, under the command of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, and another, under the Duke of Bevern, at Frankfort-on-the-Oder. Nevertheless, the public announcement that war was declared with Austria, and that the army would march for the frontier in three days' time came as a sudden shock. The proclamation stated that it having been discovered that Austria had entered into a secret confederacy with other powers to attack Prussia, and the king having after long and fruitless negotiations tried to obtain satisfaction from that power, no resource remained but to declare war at once before the confederates could combine their forces for the destruction of the kingdom.

Something like dismay was at first excited by the proclamation. A war with Austria was in itself a serious undertaking, but if the latter had powerful allies, such as Russia, France, and Saxony—and it was well known that all three looked with jealousy on the growing power of the kingdom—the position seemed well-nigh desperate. Among the troops, however, the news was received with enthusiasm. Confident in their strength and discipline, the question of the odds that might be assembled against them in no way troubled them. The conquest of Silesia had raised the prestige of the army, and the troops felt proud that they should have the opportunity of proving their valour in an even more serious struggle.

Never was there a more brilliant assembly than that at the palace the evening before the troops marched. All the general officers and their staffs were assembled, together with the ladies of the Court and those of the nobility and army. The king was in high good-humour, and moved about the rooms chatting freely with all.

"So you have come to see us at last, young sir," he said to Fergus. "I should scold you, but I hear that you have been utilizing your time well. Remember that your sword is to be used against the enemies of the country only," and nodding, he walked on.

The Princess Amelia was the centre of a group of ladies. She was a charming princess, but at times her face bore an expression of deep melancholy, and all knew that she had never ceased to mourn the fate of the man she would have chosen, Baron Trench, who had been thrown into prison by her angry father for his insolence in aspiring to his daughter's hand.

"You must be glad that your hard work is over, Drummond," Lindsay said, as they stood together watching the scene.

"I am glad that the drill is over," Fergus replied, "but I should have liked my work with the professor to have gone on for another six months."

"Ah, well, you will have opportunities to take it up again when we return after thrashing the Austrians."

"How long will that be, Lindsay?"

The latter shrugged his shoulders.

"Six months or six years; who can tell?" he said. "If it be true that Russia and France, to say nothing of Saxony, are with her, it is more likely to be years than months, and we may both come out colonels by the time it is over."

"That is if we come out at all," Fergus said, with a smile at the other's confidence.

"Oh, of course, there is that contingency, but it is one never worth reckoning with. At any rate, it is pretty certain that if we do fall, it will be with odds against us; but, of course, as aides-de-camp our chance is a good deal better than that of regimental officers. At any rate, you have had good preparation for the campaign, for your work will be child's play in comparison to what you have been going through. How you stood it I cannot make out. I worked pretty hard when I first arrived, but the drill for the first six months was tremendous, and I used to be glad to crawl into bed as soon as I had had my supper. Well, you have been a poor companion so far, Drummond."

"I am afraid I have been, but will try and make up for it in the future. I suppose there is no doubt that we shall march in the first place on Dresden?"

"I think that there is no doubt of that. There is no Saxon army to speak of, certainly nothing that can offer any serious opposition; from there there are three or four passes by which we could pour into Bohemia. Saxony is a rich country too, and will afford us a fine base for supplies as we move on. I suppose the Austrians will collect an army to oppose us in Bohemia. When we have thrashed them, I expect we shall go on straight to Vienna."

Fergus laughed. "It all sounds easy enough, Lindsay. I only hope that it will come off just as you prophesy."

"That is one advantage of fighting in a foreign service, Fergus; one fights just as stoutly for victory as if one were fighting for home, but if one is beaten it does not affect one so much. It is sad to see the country overrun and pillaged, but the houses are not the houses of our own people, the people massacred are not one's own relations and friends. One's military vanity may be hurt by defeat, otherwise one can bear it philosophically."

"I never looked at it in that light before, Lindsay, but no doubt there is a great deal in what you say. If my father had fallen on a German battle-field instead of at Culloden our estates would not have been confiscated, our glens harried, and our clansmen hunted down and massacred. No, I see there is a great difference. I suppose I should fight just as hard against the Austrians as I should have done against the English at Culloden had I been there, but defeat would have none of the same consequences. No, putting it as you do, I must own that there is a distinct advantage in foreign service that I never appreciated before. But I see people are leaving, and I am not sorry. As we are going to be up before daybreak, the sooner one turns in the better."

Karl had received the order to call his master at three, to have breakfast ready at half-past, and the horses at the door at four, with somewhat less of his usual stolidity.

"You will have harder work in the future, Karl," Fergus said.

"I shall be glad of it, sir. Never have I had such a lazy time as I have had for the last month. The first three or four days were very pleasant, then I began to think that I should like a little to do, so as to remind me that there was such a thing as work, but the last fortnight has been terrible. A man cannot sleep for twenty-four hours, and if it had not been that Donald and I have had an occasional quarrel as to our respective regiments and over the native land he is so fond of bragging about, I should have been ready to hang myself. Ah, sir, how often have I to thank my stars that I did not take my discharge, which I could have asked for, as I have served my time. I had thought of it many times, and had said to myself how delightful it would be to hear the morning call sound at a barracks near, and to turn over in my bed and go to sleep again, to have no guard to keep, no sergeant to bully

or provost-guard to arrest one, if one has taken a cup too much. This fortnight has shown me the folly of such ideas. It has taught me when I am well off, and what misery it is to be one's own master, and to be always wondering how the day is to be got through."

"Well, you are not likely to have to complain that you have nothing to do for some time now, Karl."

"No, Cornet. I have felt a new man since I heard the great news. There is always plenty to do on a campaign. There are the horses to be cleaned, food to be cooked, forage and rations to be fetched. Then, too, on a campaign everyone is merry and good-tempered, and one sings as one marches and sits round the camp-fire. One may be cold and wet and hungry, but who cares? One swears at the moment, but one laughs again as soon as the sun shines."

"Well, Karl, you had best turn in at once, for at three o'clock we shall want to be called."

"You can rely upon my waking, sir. Does my officer wish to take a full-dress suit with him?"

"No; the order is that all are to start in marching order, and that all baggage is to be cut down to the smallest proportions; no officer is to take more than can be carried in his valises."

It was the first week in August when the three columns, each twenty thousand strong, moved from their respective starting-points. Although the king was nominally in command of the central division, Marshal Keith was the real commander. He rode with the king at the head of the column, and his aides-de-camp and those of Frederick were constantly on their way up and down the line carrying orders and bringing in reports as to the manner in which the regiments maintained their respective positions, and especially how the artillery and baggage train kept up. There was no necessity

at present for taking precautions. The march would for some days lead through Prussia, and it was morally certain that the Saxon army—which was small and scattered, and even if united would not equal the strength of one of the Prussian armies—would not attempt any serious resistance, for the country was flat, and there would be no defiles where a small force of men could successfully oppose a larger one. Nevertheless the daily marches were long for the infantry and the baggage, but by no means fatiguing for mounted men.

The staff and aides-de-camp with their orderlies rode behind the leaders. The troopers were sometimes employed instead of the officers when a short written order had to be sent back to the rear of the column. The harvest having been gathered in, the cavalry rode across the open country, thus reducing the length of the column. The day was very hot, and the infantry opened their ranks as much as possible to allow the passage of what little air was moving. At nine o'clock the troops were halted. Each man had been served with a breakfast before starting, and the haversacks were now opened, and a meal made of the bread they contained, washed down with an allowance of rough wine carried in each regimental waggon; then the men sat down under the shade of greatcoats supported by ramrods and other contrivances, and either slept or talked until half-past two, when the bugle sounded.

The greatcoats were rolled up and strapped on to the knapsacks, then there was a vigorous use of the brush to remove the thick dust gathered on the march. At three the column got into motion again, and halted for the night at half-past six, when fires were lighted, coppers put on, and the main meal of the day presently served. The rations of the officers were the same as those of the men, but the greater part of them supplemented the food by that carried in their orderlies' saddle-bags. Lindsay, Fergus, and the marshal's other two aides-de-camp,

had arranged that when possible they should mess together, and their servants should prepare the meal by turns, while those not so engaged looked after the horses, saw that they were fed, watered, and groomed. The servants were all old campaigners, and though neither Lindsay nor Fergus had thought of giving them orders to that effect, both Donald and Karl had laid in a stock of provisions.

Donald had cooked a pair of fowls on the previous evening, Karl had bought a sucking-pig, one of the German officer's servants had a huge piece of salt beef that had already been boiled, while the other had a hare. It was agreed at once that the fowls should be left for early breakfast, and the beef put aside for dinner, and for supper also if nothing else could be obtained. Karl, as the servant of the junior officer, was cook for the evening, and he acquitted himself admirably. Each officer carried in his saddle-bag a tin plate, a drinking-horn, and a knife, fork, and spoon. There was no dish, but the spit was handed round and each cut off a portion. Soup made from the ration of meat was first served, then the hare and then the sucking-pig, while the four orderlies had an ample meal from the ration of meat.

A supply of spirits had been carried in the staff-waggon. This they took, plentifully watered, with the meal, with a stronger cup afterwards. The night was so fine that all agreed that it was not worth while to erect the tent carried for them in the waggon. At eight o'clock the order for the next day's march came out, and two of the king's orderlies started on horseback with copies of it to the commanders of brigades, who in their turn communicated to the colonels of their respective regiments. The next evening the force encamped round Torgau, a very strong fortress, where a great store of provisions had been collected. Ample quarters were assigned to the marshal and his staff in the town. Here they

halted for a day to allow the other armies, which had both farther to march, to keep abreast of them on their respective lines of route. Then following the Elbe, the army arrived after two marches in front of Dresden. The Court of Saxony had for years been wasting the revenues of the country in extravagance and luxury, while intriguing incessantly with Austria, and dreaming of obtaining an increase of territory at the expense of Prussia. No effort had been made to prepare to carry out the engagements entered into with Austria, and the army, utterly neglected, numbered but some fifteen thousand.

These were scattered over the country, and but poorly provided with artillery. When, then, the news arrived that three Prussian armies had crossed the frontier, there was no thought of resistance, but orders were despatched for the whole force to concentrate at Pirna, a strongly fortified camp among the defiles of the mountains separating Saxony from Bohemia. The position was almost an impregnable one, and they could receive reinforcements from Bohemia.

On the arrival of the Prussian army the king fled, and Dresden threw open its gates. As Frederick hoped to detach Saxony from the alliance against him, the greater portion of the army were encamped outside the town, three or four regiments only marching in and quartering themselves in the empty Saxon barracks.

The aid Saxony could render Frederick would be insignificant, but it was most desirable for him that he should ensure its neutrality, in order to secure his communications with Prussia when he marched forward into Bohemia. Finding the king had gone, his first step was to send a general officer with a party of soldiers to seize the archives in the palace. Among these was discovered the prize he most desired to find, namely, a signed copy of the secret treaty between Austria,

Russia, France, and Saxony for the invasion and partition of Prussia. Copies of this document were instantly sent off to the Courts of Europe, thus affording an ample justification for what would otherwise have appeared a wholly unprovoked attack by Prussia upon her neighbours. Had it not been for the discovery of this document Frederick would probably have always remained under the stigma of engaging in an unprovoked and ambitious war, for the Court of Austria had hitherto positively and categorically declared to Frederick's ambassador and envoys the non-existence of any such treaty or agreement between the powers.

As the queen had remained in the palace, Frederick took up his abode in another royal building, Marshal Keith and a large number of officers being also quartered there. In order to prevent any broils with the citizens, orders were issued that certain places of refreshment were to be used only by officers, while the soldiers were only to frequent wine and beer shops selected in the neighbourhood of the barracks, and were strictly forbidden to enter any others. Any soldier caught in an act of theft or pillage was to be hung forthwith, and all were enjoined to observe a friendly demeanour to the people.

One evening Fergus had been sent with a message to the camp, two miles from the town. It was nearly ten o'clock when he started to ride back. When within half a mile of the town he heard a pistol-shot in the direction of a large house a quarter of a mile from the road. Without hesitation he turned his horse's head in that direction. In a couple of minutes he arrived at a pair of large gates; they were closed, but he dismounted, fastened the bridle-chain to them, and snatching the pistols from his holsters ran along by the side of a high wall until he came to a tree growing close to it.

With some difficulty, for his high boots were ill-adapted to such work, he climbed the tree, got on to the wall, and

dropped down. He was in large park-like grounds. Guided by a light in a window he ran to the house. The door was closed. After hesitating for a moment he ran along, and soon coming, as he expected, to an open window, he at once climbed through it. A door was open, and passing on he entered a large hall in which a light was burning. Pausing to listen now, he heard voices upstairs, and holding a pistol in each hand and his drawn sword in his teeth, he lightly ascended the stairs. On the landing two men lay dead. Light was issuing from a half-closed door, and noiselessly approaching it, he looked in. It was a small room; at the end stood eight or ten scared women huddled together, while a soldier, with a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other, stood sentry over them.

These were evidently the servants of the chateau, who had been unceremoniously hauled from their beds and gathered there under a guard to prevent them from screaming or giving any alarm. As Fergus was equally anxious that no alarm should be given at present, he retired quietly. A pair of double doors faced the top of the staircase. This was evidently the grand reception-room, and listening intently he could hear a murmur of voices inside. Turning the handle and throwing them suddenly open, he entered. Upon the floor lay the body of a gentleman; a lady, pale as death and in a half-fainting condition, leant back in a settee, while a girl of thirteen or fourteen lay on a couch, with bound hands and a handkerchief fastened across her mouth. Three soldiers were engaged in examining the contents of a large coffer of jewels.

As the door opened they turned round, and on seeing a solitary officer sprang forward with terrible oaths. Fergus shot one of them as they did so, dropped the pistol, and seized his sword. Both men fired. Fergus felt a stinging sensation

in his left arm, and the pistol held in that hand dropped to the ground. Confident in his swordsmanship, he awaited the onslaught of the two marauders. The swords clashed, and at the second pass one of them fell back, run through the body. The other, shouting for aid, stood on the defensive. Fergus heard the rush of heavy steps coming down the staircase, and just as three other men rushed into the room, he almost clove his opponent's head in two with a tremendous blow from his claymore.

Two of the new-comers fired their pistols hastily—both missed—then rushed at him with their swords, and as he was hotly engaged with them, the third, who was the sentry who had been placed over the women, advanced slowly with his pistol pointed, with the intention of making sure of his aim. He paused close to the combatants, waiting for an opportunity to fire between the shifting figures of his comrades, when a white figure, after peering in at the door, ran swiftly forward and threw herself on his back, hurling him forward to the ground, his pistol exploding as he fell. One of the others started back at the sound, and as he did so Fergus ran him through the body. He then attacked his remaining opponent, and after a few passes laid him dead beside his comrade. Picking up his own fallen pistol, Fergus blew out the brains of the soldier who was struggling to free himself from the girl's weight, and then helped her to her feet.

"Well done, my brave girl!" he said; "you have saved my life. Now run and tell those wenches to stop screaming, and to come and help their mistress. These scoundrels are all killed, and there is nothing more for them to be alarmed at."

Then he ran to the girl on the sofa, cut her cords with a dagger, and freed her from the gag. As he did so she leapt up and ran to her mother's side, while Fergus, kneeling by

the gentleman who had fallen before he had entered, turned him over, and laying his ear over his heart, listened intently.

"He is alive," he said. "His heart beats, but faintly. Tell the maids to fetch some cordial."

The women were coming in now, some crying hysterically, some shrieking afresh at the sight of the bodies that were strewn about the room.

"Silence!" Fergus shouted, sternly. "Now, while one runs to fetch some cordial, do three others come here and aid me to lift your master gently on to this couch."

The maid who had overthrown the soldier at once came forward to his assistance.

"Now, Truchen and Lisa," the young girl said, stamping her foot, "come at once. Do you, Caroline, run and fetch the stand of cordials from the dining-room."

The two women approached timidly.

"Now," Fergus said, "get your arm under his shoulders on your side, and I will do the same. One of you others support his head when we lift, the other take his feet."

So, gently he was raised and laid on the couch. By the time this was done, the woman returned with a bottle of spirits.

"Now," he said, "water and a glass."

The young girl ran and fetched a carafe of water and a tumbler standing on a table by the wall. Her hands shook as she handed it to Fergus.

"Are you sure that he is not dead, sir?" she asked in a hushed voice.

"Quite sure. I fear that he is grievously wounded, but he certainly lives. Now, get another glass and put some spirits in, and fill it up with water and make your mother drink it, as soon as you have roused her from her faint."

Fergus now gave all his attention to the wounded man.

poured two or three spoonfuls of strong spirits and water between his lips, and then proceeded to examine his wounds. He had three. One was a very severe cut upon the shoulder; his left arm had been broken by a pistol-bullet; and he had a dangerous sword-thrust in the body. Under Fergus' direction the servant had cut off the doublet, and after pouring some more spirits down the wounded man's throat, he bade one of the other women fetch him some soft linen and a sheet.

When these arrived he made a pad of the linen, and bound it over the wounded man's shoulder with some strips torn from the sheet. Then he sent for some straight strips of wood, cut them to the right length, wrapped some linen round them, and straightening the arm, applied them to it, and with the assistance of the girl bandaged it firmly. Then he placed a pad of linen over the wound in the body, and passed bandages round and round.

"Well done," he said to his assistant; "you are a stout girl, and a brave one." Then he turned to the others, who were crowded round their mistress. "Stand back," he said, "and throw open the window and let the air come to her. That will do. The young lady and this girl will be enough now, do the rest of you run off and get some clothes on."

"She has opened her eyes once, sir."

"She will come round directly, young lady. Pour a spoonful or two from this glass between her lips; it is stronger than that you have in your hand. She has had a terrible shock, but as soon as she hears that your father is alive, it will do more for her than all our services."

"Will he live, sir?"

"That I cannot say for certain, but I have great hopes that he will do so. However, I will send a surgeon out as soon as I get to the city."

The lady was longer in her swoon than Fergus had ex-

pected, and the servants had returned before she opened her eyes.

"Now," he said, "do four of you lend me your assistance. It would be well to carry this sofa with your master into the next room, and then we will take your mistress in there too, so that she will be spared seeing these ruffians scattered about when she comes to herself."

The doors leading to the adjoining apartment were opened, candles lighted there, and the wounded man carried in on his sofa.

"And now for your mistress. It will be easier to lift her out of the chair and carry her in bodily." This he did with the assistance of two of the servants. "Now," he said to the young girl, "do you stay by her, my brave maid. I think she will recover in a minute or two. Her eyelids moved as I brought her in. I will look round and see about things. Were these the only two men in the house?" he asked the other women as he joined them on the landing.

"No, sir, there were six men. The other four have gone to bed, but the two outside always waited up till the count and countess retired."

"Where are their rooms?" he asked, taking a candle. One of the women led him upstairs. As he expected he found the four men lying dead. One had apparently leapt up as the door was opened, and the other three had been killed in their beds.

"Where can I get help from?"

"There are the men at the stables. It is at the back of the house, three or four hundred yards away."

"Well, take one of the other women with you and go and rouse them. Tell them to dress and come here at once."

He now went down to the gate, undid the fastening, and then led his horse up to the house. In a few minutes the stable-

men arrived. He ordered them to carry the bodies of the six marauders out and lay them in front of the house. When they had done so they were to take those of the servants and place them in an outhouse. Then he went upstairs again.

"The countess has recovered, sir," one of the women said.

"Tell her that I will send one of the army surgeons down at once. But first bandage my arm; it is but a flesh wound, I know, but I am feeling faint, and am sure that it is keeping on bleeding. Here, my girl," he said to one who had before assisted, "I can trust to you not to faint."

With her assistance he took off his coat, the arm of which was saturated with blood. "You had better cut off the sleeve of the shirt," he said. This was done, and the nature of the wound was seen. A ball had ploughed through the flesh three inches below the shoulder, inflicting a gaping but not serious wound. "It is lucky that it was not the inside of the arm," he said to the girl as she bandaged it up, "for had it been I should have bled to death in a very few minutes. Has the count opened his eyes yet?"

"No, sir, he is lying just as he was."

"What is the gentleman's name?"

"Count Eulenfurst."

"You had better give me a draught of wine before I start. I feel shaken, and it is possible that riding may set my wound bleeding again."

Having drunk a goblet of wine, Fergus went down and mounted his horse. As he did so he said to one of the men: "Take a lantern and go down to the spot where the road hither turns off from the main road. A surgeon will be here in half an hour or perhaps in twenty minutes. He will be on the look-out for you and your lantern."

Events had passed quickly, and the church-bell chimed a quarter to eleven as he rode through the streets of Dresden.

In three minutes he drew up at the entrance to the royal quarters. As he dismounted Karl came out.

"Keep the horse here, Karl," he said; "it may be wanted in a minute or two again."

"Are you hurt, sir?" the man asked as he dismounted, for he saw his face by the light of the torches on each side of the gateway.

"It is only a flesh wound and of no consequence; but I have lost a good deal of blood."

He made his way up the staircase to the marshal's quarters. He was feeling dizzy and faint now.

"Is the marshal in his room?" he asked.

"He is in, sir, but——"

"I would speak to him immediately. 'Tis a most urgent matter."

The servant went in, a moment later held the door open and said: "Will you enter, sir?"

Fergus entered and made the usual formal salute to the marshal. Two or three other officers were in the room, but he did not heed who they were, nor hear the exclamations of surprise that broke out at his appearance.

"I beg to report, sir, that the house of the Count Eulenfurst has been attacked by marauders belonging to one of the Pomeranian regiments. The count is desperately wounded, and I pray that a surgeon may be sent instantly to his aid. The house stands back from the road about half a mile from the north gate. A man with a lantern will be standing in the road to guide him to it. My horse is at the door below in readiness to take him. I pray you to allow me to retire." He swayed and would have fallen had not the marshal and one of the others present caught him and laid him down on a couch.

"He is wounded, Marshal," the other officer said. "This sleeve is saturated with blood."

The marshal raised his voice and called an attendant, "Run to the quarters of Staff-surgeon Schmidt, and ask him to come here immediately, and to bring another of his staff with him if there is one in."

In two minutes the king's chief surgeon entered, followed by another of his staff.

"First look to the wound of Cornet Drummond," the marshal said. "It is in the arm, and I trust that he has only fainted from loss of blood."

The surgeons examined the wound. "It is in no way serious, Marshal. As you say, he has fainted from loss of blood; he must have neglected it for some time. Had it been bandaged at once it would only have had the consequence of disabling his arm for a fortnight or so."

The assistant had already hurried away to get lint and bandages.

Another voice now spoke. "Surgeon Schmidt, you will please at once mount Mr. Drummond's horse, which is standing at the door. Ride out through the north gate. When you have gone about half a mile you will see a man with a lantern. He will lead you to the house of Count Eulenfurst, who has been grievously wounded by some marauders. Surgeon Morfen will follow you as soon as he has bandaged Mr. Drummond's wounds. There may be more wounded there who may need your care. Major Armfeldt, will you order a horse to be brought round at once for the surgeon, then hurry to the barracks. Order the colonel to turn out a troop of horse instantly, and let him scour the country between the north gate and the camp and arrest every straggler he comes across."

CHAPTER IV

PROMOTION

AS soon as the bandage was applied and the flow of blood ceased a few spoonfuls of wine were poured down the patient's throat. It was not long before he opened his eyes and struggled into a sitting position.

"I beg pardon, sir," he said, faintly, as his eyes fell on the marshal, who was standing just in front of him. "I am sorry that I came into your apartments in this state, but it seemed to me——"

"You did quite right, sir," said a sharp voice that he at once recognized, while the speaker put his hand upon his shoulder to prevent him from trying to rise. "You were quite right to bring the news here at once of this outrage, which, by heavens! shall be punished as it deserves. Now drink a cup of wine, and then perhaps you will be able to tell us a little more about it. Now, don't be in a hurry, but obey my orders."

Fergus drank off the wine, then, after waiting a minute or two, said:

"Count Eulenfurst is sorely wounded, sire, but I cannot say whether mortally or not. When I came away he was still lying insensible. His wife and daughter are, happily, uninjured."

"Was anyone else hurt?"

"Yes, sire, the six men-servants who were sleeping in the house were all killed—four in their beds, two while hastening from below to assist their master."

The king gave an exclamation of fury.

"You said these men belonged to a Pomeranian regiment.

Had they left before you got there? But I suppose not, or else you would not have been wounded. How was it that you heard of the attack?"

"I had carried a despatch from the marshal to the camp, sire, and was on my way back, when I heard a pistol-shot. The sound was faint, for it came from a house a quarter of a mile away, and was fired indoors; but the night was still, and fortunately some of the windows were open. Thinking that some evil work was being done, I rode straight for it, climbed the wall, and making my way on foot to the house, happily arrived in time."

"You saw the fellows, then? How was it that they suffered you to escape with your life? They must have known that your evidence would hang them all."

"There were but six of them, sire, and they will need no hanging, for they are all disposed of; though, had it not been for the assistance of a brave servant-maid, who threw herself upon the back of one of them, my career would certainly have been terminated."

"But who had you with you to help you?" the king asked.

"I had no one but the maid, sire."

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Drummond, that with your own hand you slew the whole of the six villains?"

"That was so, sire; but in respect to the one thrown down by the girl, I had but to blow out his brains before he could gain his feet."

"Can you give us the particulars?" the king asked, quietly. "If you do not feel equal to it, we will wait till morning."

"I can tell you now, sire, I am feeling better and stronger;" and he related the incidents of the fight.

"One with his pistol, Keith," the king said, "four with

his sword, after his left hand was disabled, to say nothing of the sixth; that is not a bad beginning for this aide-de-camp, gentlemen."

"No, indeed, sire, it is a most gallant deed, though it was well for him that he was able to dispose of the first three before the others appeared on the scene."

"It was a most gallant action, indeed," the king repeated, and a hearty assent was given by the general officers standing round. "I congratulate you on your aide-de-camp, Keith," he went on. "A man capable of killing single-handed six of my Pomeranians is a treasure. Do you see that his commission as lieutenant is given me to-morrow to sign. No, sit still, young sir; it is I who have to thank you for so promptly punishing these marauders, who would have brought disgrace upon my army, and not you who have to thank me. Now, be off to your bed."

Two of the attendants were called in, and these assisted Fergus, who was almost too weak to stand, to the apartment that he shared with Lindsay. Keith himself accompanied them. Lindsay leapt out of bed as they entered.

"Don't ask any questions, Lindsay," the marshal said. "Drummond has performed a very gallant action, and has been wounded, and as you see, can scarce stand from loss of blood. He will be asleep as soon as he lies down. You will hear all about it in the morning."

The marshal then returned to his apartment. The king was on the point of leaving.

"I have left orders," he said, "that as soon as either of the surgeons returns, I am to be awakened and informed of the state of Count Eulenfurst. He is a nobleman of distinction and character, though, I believe, in no great favour at the Court here since he resigned his seat on the council because he disapproved of the resources of the state being wasted in ex-

travagance, instead of being spent in maintaining the army in proper condition. Should he die, it will cause an extremely bad impression throughout Saxony."

At daybreak the next morning, finding that the surgeons had not returned, Keith despatched an officer to request them to furnish him at once with a written report of the state of the count. He returned in three-quarters of an hour, saying that the count had just recovered consciousness, that two of his wounds were serious, and the other very grave; but that having probed it, they were of opinion that it might not prove fatal. The countess was completely prostrated, and had gone from one fainting fit into another, and required more attention than her husband. The rest of the household were uninjured. Lindsay got up quietly and dressed without awaking Fergus. He was disappointed at a despatch being at once handed to him to carry to the Prince of Brunswick's army, which was ten miles away, and was therefore obliged to mount and ride off without obtaining any news whatever as to the nature of Drummond's adventure.

As he passed through the camp of the Pomeranians he saw the bodies of six soldiers swinging from the bough of a tree close to the camp. He rode a little out of his way to discover the cause of this strange spectacle. In front of them was erected a large placard of canvas, with the words painted upon it:

Marauders killed in the commission of crime, and their bodies hung by order of the king, as a lesson to anyone who ventures to break the law against plundering.

Then he rode on his way, and did not return until one o'clock. The marshal was occupied. He therefore simply handed in the reply to the despatch that he had carried and immediately retired.

"Is Mr. Drummond up?" he asked one of the attendants.

"He is still in his room, sir, his servant is with him, and he is taking food."

He went straight to the room. Fergus was sitting up in a chair eating a basin of strong chicken-broth.

"This is a nice hour to be breakfasting, Lindsay," he said with a smile. "I feel quite ashamed of myself, I can tell you; but I am under orders. The doctor came here half an hour ago. I had just woke and got out of bed, and was going to dress when he told me that I was not to do so. I might sit up to take breakfast, but was to keep perfectly quiet for the rest of the day. He said I only needed feeding up, that he would send me some strong broth, and three hours later I was to have some soup and a pint of Burgundy, and that if I obeyed his instructions and ate and drank well I should be able to leave my room to-morrow, though, of course, I should not be fit for active service till my arm began to heal."

"But what is it all about, Drummond? I was sent off to Brunswick's camp as soon as I got up, and have heard nothing about it, and the marshal forbade me to speak to you when you were brought in last night. He merely said that you had done a very gallant action."

"There was nothing very gallant in it, Lindsay, but it turned out very fortunate." Then he gave a very brief account of the previous evening's events.

"Well, I should call that a gallant action, Drummond, if you don't. It is no joke for one man to tackle six, and those not ordinary marauders but Pomeranian soldiers. Of course it was somewhat lucky that you had rid yourself of three of them before the other three entered the room, and had it not been, as you say, for that girl, things might have turned out differently. Still, that does not affect the matter; it was a gallant business. What happened when you came in?"

"I don't know much about what happened. At first I made some sort of report to the marshal, and then I believe I fainted. When I came to I found that they had bandaged up my shoulder and poured some wine down my throat. I felt very shaky at first, but I know that I drank some wine, and was then able to give some sort of account of what had happened. The king was there then and asked me questions, but whether or not he was there at first I cannot say. I have a vague idea that he told the marshal, too, that he promoted me, but I am not quite sure about that, nor do I know how I got here."

"Well, if you are not mistaken about your step, I congratulate you most heartily. It is seldom, indeed, that anyone gains one in six weeks after his first appointment. I thought myself lucky indeed in getting it after serving only two years and a half, but I got it simply on nomination as one of the marshal's aides-de-camp; it is customary to get promotion on such appointment if there has been two or three years' previous service. Well, you have drawn the first blood in this campaign, Drummond, and have not been long in giving very striking proof that your month's hard work in the fencing-school has not been thrown away."

The conversation was broken off by the entry of the marshal himself.

"Pooh, pooh! Fergus," he said as the latter rose, "there is no occasion for saluting in a bedroom. I am glad to see you looking so much better; you could not have looked more ghastly when you came in yesterday evening if you had been your own wraith. There, lad," he said, handing him a parchment, "it is not usual to have a new commission on promotion, but the king told me that he had had it done in the present case in order that you might have a record of the exploit for which you have been promoted. You will see it is set down

inside that although but six weeks in service you were promoted to the rank of lieutenant for a deed of extraordinary gallantry. You had attacked and killed with your own hand six marauding soldiers who had entered the chateau of Count Eulenfurst, well-nigh murdered the count, killed six of his servants, and were occupied in plundering the house. In token of his thankfulness that the life of so distinguished and enlightened a nobleman had been saved by you, as well as of approbation for the gallantry of your conduct, his Majesty promoted you to the rank of lieutenant.

"You should keep that paper, Fergus, and pass it down to your descendants as an heirloom. I congratulate you, my boy, with all my heart, and feel some satisfaction on my own account, for such an action as this shows those who are inclined to grumble at what they may consider the favour shown to Scotchmen, that at any rate the favour is not misplaced. A general order to the army has been issued this morning, saying that some scoundrels having disgraced their uniform and brought discredit upon the army by a murderous and wicked attack upon the house of Count Eulenfurst, the king reiterates and confirms his previous order that any man caught when engaged in pillaging, or upon whose person any stolen goods are found, will be summarily hung by the provost-marshal, or by any general officer before whom he may be brought. The king himself has ridden to the count's chateau this morning to make personal inquiries into his state, and to express his deep regret at the outrage that has taken place. It is a politic action as well as a kind one. Of course the event has occasioned great excitement in the city."

"And may I ask how the count is going on, sir?"

"The last report of the surgeons is a favourable one. He has partly recovered consciousness, and at any rate recognizes

his daughter, who has divided her time between his bedside and her mother's. The latter has fallen into a deep sleep of exhaustion, but will, I doubt not, recover. The girl came down into the hall when the king called. She bore herself well, they tell me, and would have retained her composure had it not been for the king himself. She came down the grand staircase with four of her maids behind her—for a notice had been sent half an hour before of his coming—prepared, no doubt, to meet a stiff and haughty king, but though Frederick can be every inch a king when he chooses, there is, as you know, no kinder-hearted man alive.

"He went forward bareheaded to meet her, and as she stopped and curtsied low he took her two hands and said, 'My poor child, I am sorry, more sorry than I can tell you, for what has happened, and hope with all my heart that your father, whom all respect and honour, will not be taken from you. No doubt you look upon me as an enemy; but although compelled to come here because your king is leagued with those who intend to destroy me and my country, I bear no ill-will to the people, and have given the strictest orders that my soldiers shall in all respects treat them as firm friends. But, unfortunately, there are scoundrels everywhere. These men have been punished as they deserved, and the whole army will join with me in deep regret at what has happened, and in the fervent hope that your father's life will be spared. I grieve, too, to hear that the countess, your mother, has suffered so greatly from the shock, and hope soon to be able to express to her in person the regret I feel for what has taken place.'

"The kindness of his tone in saying all this broke her down more than the words of the king. He saw that she was unable to speak. 'There, there, child,' he said, 'I know what you are feeling, and that you are longing to go upstairs again, so I will say good-bye. Keep up a brave heart; the surgeons

have every hope that your father will recover. And believe that you will always have a friend in Frederick of Prussia.' He kissed her on the cheek, and then turned and left the hall, followed by his staff."

Three days later the doctors were able to say confidently that unless some change occurred for the worse they believed the count would recover. On the fourth day Fergus was sufficiently well to mount his horse. The countess and her daughter had repeatedly asked after him, and expressed their desire that he would come over as soon as he was well enough to do so. One of the aides-de-camp had gone over twice a day to inquire as to the progress the count was making. A guard had been placed at the gate, and an officer stationed there to receive the names of the stream of visitors from the city, and to inform them that the count was making satisfactory progress. By the doctor's orders even the count's most intimate friends were refused admission, as absolute quiet was needed.

Fergus dismounted at the gate and walked up to the house. The maid who opened the door recognized him at once. "Will you come in, sir?" she said, with a beaming face. "I will tell the young countess you are here, and she will, I am sure, see you."

A minute later the girl ran down the stairs. As she came forward she stopped with sudden shyness. Absorbed in her anxiety for her father and mother, she had taken but little heed of the appearance of the officer who had saved them. That he was kind as well as brave she was sure, for although he had scarce spoken to her, the gentleness with which he had moved her father and her mother from the blood-stained room, and the promptness and decision with which he had given his orders had inspired her with absolute confidence in him. She had a vague idea that he was young, but his face, flecked here

and there with blood, had left but a faint impression upon her memory, and when she saw the young officer in his spotless and imposing uniform she almost felt that there must be some mistake.

"Are you Lieutenant Drummond, sir?" she asked, timidly.

"I am, Countess."

"Was it really you who saved us the other night?"

"I had that good fortune," he said, with a smile. She took the hand he held out wonderingly, and then suddenly burst into tears. "Oh, sir," she said, "is it possible that you who look so young can be the one who came to our assistance and killed those six evil men? It seems impossible. I have been so unhappy since. I did not know that you were wounded until the maids told me afterwards. I had never even asked. I let you go without one word of thanks for all that you have done for us. What must you have thought of me?"

"I thought that you were a very courageous girl," Fergus said, earnestly, "and that after what you had gone through, the sight of your father as you believed dying, and your mother in such a state, you were wonderfully calm and composed. It would have been strange indeed had you thought of anything else at such a time."

"You are very good to say so, sir; but when I heard from the surgeons you sent, that you had fainted from loss of blood after delivering your message, I felt that I should never forgive myself. You had thought so much of us and not of yourself, you had gone about seeing to our comfort and giving orders and arranging everything, and all the time you yourself needed aid."

"The wound was a mere trifle," he said, "and I scarce gave it a thought myself until I began to feel faint from loss of blood. I can assure you that the thought that you were ungrateful has never once entered my head."

"And now you will please come up to see my mother, sir. She will be most anxiously expecting you."

They went upstairs together, and turning to the right on the top of the stairs entered a pretty apartment that was evidently the countess's boudoir.

"This is our preserver, mother," the girl said as she entered. The countess, who was advancing towards the door, stopped in surprise. She had been able from her daughter to gain no idea of the age of their rescuer, but the maids had all asserted that he was quite young. As he was, for so the surgeons had told her, one of Marshal Keith's aides-de-camp, she had pictured to herself a fierce soldier, and the sight of this youth with his smooth, pleasant face surprised her indeed.

"Yes, mother, it is himself," the girl said. "I was as surprised as you are."

"I have no words to thank you, sir, for the most inestimable service which you have rendered us," the countess said, warmly, as she held out her hand. "Assuredly my husband would have died had aid been delayed but a few minutes. As to my daughter and myself they would probably have killed us to prevent our ever recognizing or giving evidence against them. They only spared our lives for a time in order to learn where our jewels were kept. This was but a comparative trifle, though the jewels are precious, and there are none more valuable in Saxony. I have no doubt that after stripping the house of its valuables they would have buried them, intending some day to recover them, and would then have fired the house in order to conceal all evidence of the crime that had been committed. It seemed to me wonderful before that one man should, single-handed, have attacked and slain them, but now that I see you it seems almost a miracle that you performed in our favour."

"It was no great feat, madam. I have the good fortune to

be a fair swordsman, and soldiers, although they may know their military drill, have little chance with one who can use his weapon well. Then, too, I had fortunately but three to deal with at a time, and even then I should not have come off victorious had it not been for the courage of the maid, who ran boldly in, sprang on the back of one and threw him to the ground, while he was waiting to get a steady aim at me with his pistol. I assuredly owe my life to her."

"The King of Prussia left twenty gold crowns for her when he was here, saying that it was payment for saving the life of one of his officers, and you may be sure that we shall not be ungrateful to her. Your death would have involved that of my husband and us. The king also ordered that inquiry should be made as to whether our men who were killed had families dependent upon them, and that, if so, pensions were to be given to these, as their loss had been occasioned by the evil deeds of some of his soldiers. It was very thoughtful and kind, and my daughter seems quite to have fallen in love with him. I hope that in a few days my husband will be able to see you. He does not know that you are here. If he did I am sure that he would wish to see you now; but the surgeons have insisted so strongly on absolute quiet that I dare not let him hear of your coming."

"I am delighted to learn that he is going on so well, madam. I sincerely trust that he will not long remain an invalid."

"I suppose you would not have recognized me?" the countess asked.

"I should not, indeed. Of course, I could do nothing to aid you, and was chiefly occupied by the count. But indeed you were then so pale that I might well be excused for not knowing you again."

The countess was a very handsome woman of some seven

or eight and thirty, with a noble figure and a gracious air, and bore no resemblance to the almost distraught woman with her hair falling over her face whom he had seen before.

"I am not a coward, Mr. Drummond," she said, "and when those villains first ran in and attacked my husband I struggled desperately with the two who seized me, until I saw him drop, as I believed, dead; then my strength suddenly left me, and I should have fallen to the ground had the men not thrown me back into the chair. I have a vague recollection of seeing Thirza, who had retired for the night but a minute or two previously, carried in bound and gagged. They asked me several questions, but I could not reply; and I think they learned from the frightened servants where the family jewels were kept. The clashing of swords and the firing of pistols roused me a little, and after it was all over, and I heard you say that my husband was still living, my heart gave one bound, and I knew nothing more of what happened until next day."

After chatting for a short time longer, Fergus took his leave, well pleased to have got through a visit he had somewhat dreaded.

The king remained for nearly a month at Dresden, engaged in carrying on negotiations with the Elector. By this delay he lost most of the advantages that his sudden movement had given him, but he was most anxious to detach Saxony and Poland from the confederacy against him, as he would then be able to turn his attention wholly to Austria, aided by the Saxons, while the Poles would aid his army in the east to keep the Russians in check. The Elector of Saxony, who was also King of Poland, however, was only negotiating in order to give time for Austria to gather an army in Bohemia, and so to relieve the Saxons, who were watched by the eastern column which had crossed the defiles into Bohemia

and taken post near Königgrätz, while that of Prince Maurice of Brunswick pushed forward farther to threaten their line of retreat from the west.

The king at last became convinced that the King of Poland was but trifling with him, and in the last week of September started to take the command of the centre, which was facing the entrance to the defile at Pirna. Marshal Keith had been sent, a week after Fergus was wounded, to assume the command of the western column, hitherto commanded by Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. Fergus remained behind for ten days, at the end of which time he felt perfectly fit for service again. He still carried his arm in a sling, but a generous diet and good wine had filled his veins again, and upon the day the king left he rode with Karl to rejoin the marshal.

He had been several times over to the chateau, and had on the last occasion seen the count, who, although still terribly weak, was now out of danger and able to sit on a couch propped up by pillows. His thanks were as earnest as those of the countess had been, and having heard that Fergus was to start on the following morning to join the army on the frontier, he said to him:

"There is no saying how far your king may carry his arms, nor where you may find yourself; the countess will therefore write letters addressed to intimate friends at various large towns, telling them that you have placed us under a vast obligation, and praying them to do for our sake all in their power for you, under whatever circumstances you may arrive there.

"She will write them on small pieces of paper, each with its name and address on the back, so that they will make a small and compact packet, not much bigger than an ordinary letter. I trust that when you return to Dresden, Lieutenant, I shall be able myself to do my best to prove my gratitude for your services."

After taking leave of the count, his wife and daughter, Fergus rode back to the royal quarters. As Karl took his horse he said:

"Herr Lieutenant, I know not how we are going to manage."

"In what way, Karl?"

"Two magnificent horses, complete with saddlery, holsters, and pistols, arrived here half an hour since; the man who brought them said they were from Count Eulenfurst, and handed me this note."

Pray accept the horses we send you as a feeble token of our gratitude. May they, by their speed and staunchness, carry you unharmed through dangers well-nigh as great as those you faced for us.

Fergus walked by the side of the soldier as he led the horse round to the stable. "There, sir," Karl said, pointing to a pair of splendid animals, "they are fit for a king."

"'Tis a noble gift, and, indeed, I doubt whether the king himself has such horses in his stables. The question is, what is to be done with them? My present charger is an excellent one, and, as a gift of the marshal, I could not part with it; as to the others, it is out of the question that I can take both; it would be altogether contrary to rules. I am entitled to forage for two horses, that is when forage is to be had. Ah, I see what had best be done; come to my room with me, I will give you a letter to the count."

He wrote as follows:

Dear Count Eulenfurst:

I cannot refuse the noble gift that you have made me, and thank you and the countess for it with all my heart. At present, however, it places me in a difficulty. Aides-de-camp are

allowed to take only two horses; indeed, my orderly could not take with him more than one led horse. The animal I have was the gift of Marshal Keith; that being so, you will see that I could not part with it. The only solution, therefore, that occurs to me is to beg you to add to your kindness by taking care of the one that I send back to you by the bearer, until I return to Dresden, or find means to send for it, in the event of one of the others being killed. The only fault with your gifts is that they ought to be kept for state reviews or grand occasions, for it seems wrong to take such noble creatures into the midst of a heavy fire. I am sure that I shall feel more nervous lest a ball should injure my horse than I shall do for my own safety.

When he had folded and sealed this he handed it to Karl, who had followed shortly after him. "I am sending back one of the horses, Karl, and asking the count to take care of it for me, until I return or send for it. Do you see any difference between them?"

"It would be hard to pick the best, Lieutenant. They both struck me as being perfect in all points—both are four years old."

"Well, then, you must take one at random, Karl. Had one been better than the other I should have left it behind; as it is, take whichever you choose."

"The man who brought them told me, sir, that both were bred on the count's estates, and that he prided himself on having some of the best blood in Europe, both for beauty and stamina; he thought this pair were the pick of the stables."

"I almost wish I could leave them both behind, but I could not do so without hurting the feelings of the count and countess. But they are too good for an aide-de-camp's work."

"I don't think anything can be too good for that, sir. An

aide-de-camp wants a horse that will stop at nothing, and sometimes he has to ride for his life, pursued by the enemy's cavalry. You will be the envy of the division on one of those horses."

Karl returned an hour later with a message from the countess, saying that she could not disturb her husband, who was then resting, but that she understood Mr. Drummond's difficulty, and they should be very glad to take care of the horse for him until he wanted it.

"You did not see the countess, I suppose, Karl?"

"Yes, sir, I saw her. She had me taken upstairs to her room. She asked if I was your servant, and when I said yes, she told me that she hoped I would take great care of you. I said that was my duty. 'Nevertheless, do more than your duty,' she said; 'his life is a very precious one to us—is it not, Thirza?'

"The young lady nodded. 'Here are five gold crowns for yourself,' she went on, handing me the money; 'they may help to make your bivouac more comfortable; and now,' she said, 'there is something else, but I do not wish you to tell your master.' What am I to do, your honour?"

"You had better keep it to yourself, Karl," Fergus laughed. "I daresay I shall hear of it some day."

"Very well, Lieutenant, then that is all there is to report."

The next morning Fergus started early. Two days previously a Prussian governor had been appointed to Dresden, and three thousand men were left under his command. Similar appointments were also made to all the fortified towns in Saxony, for now that the negotiations were broken off and the King of Poland had declared finally for the Confederates, Saxony was to be treated as a conquered country. Nevertheless, strict injunctions were given that all cattle, wheat, and other provisions taken for the use of the garrisons, or for stor-

ing up in fortresses whence it might be forwarded to the army, were to be paid for, and that any act of pillage or ill-treatment was to be most severely punished, as the king was still most anxious to gain the good-will of the mass of the population.

CHAPTER V

LOBOSITZ

IN Dresden itself the feeling was far from hostile to the invaders. The discontent with the vicious government had been extreme, and the imposts now levied were less onerous than those which had been wasted in confusion and extravagance. The conduct of the troops had been admirable; and in the case of Count Eulenfurst, the personal visit of the king to express his regrets, and his generosity to the families of the servants, had produced a most excellent effect. As Fergus rode into the camp, mounted on his new acquisition, it at once caught the marshal's eye.

"Why, Fergus," he exclaimed, "have you been robbing the King of Poland's stables? That is a noble animal indeed."

"It was a present from Count Eulenfurst, Marshal," Fergus replied. "He sent me two, but one of them he is going to keep for me until I return, for I could not part with Rollo, who is as good a horse as anyone can wish to ride, and I know his paces."

"You are right, lad, for it is always well to accustom yourself to a horse before you want to use it in action; but in faith, it will be a pity to ride such a horse as that through the heat of a battle."

"I feel that, sir; but as the count in his letter with the

horses said that he hoped they would carry me safely through dangers as grave as those I had encountered at his house, I feel that he would be hurt if on my return I admitted to him that I had saved it for show occasions."

"You are right," Keith said, approvingly, "but that is the more reason that you should accustom yourself to it before you use it for such work, as horse and rider should be as one on the field of battle, and unless the horse has absolute confidence in its rider it is very difficult to keep it steady under fire."

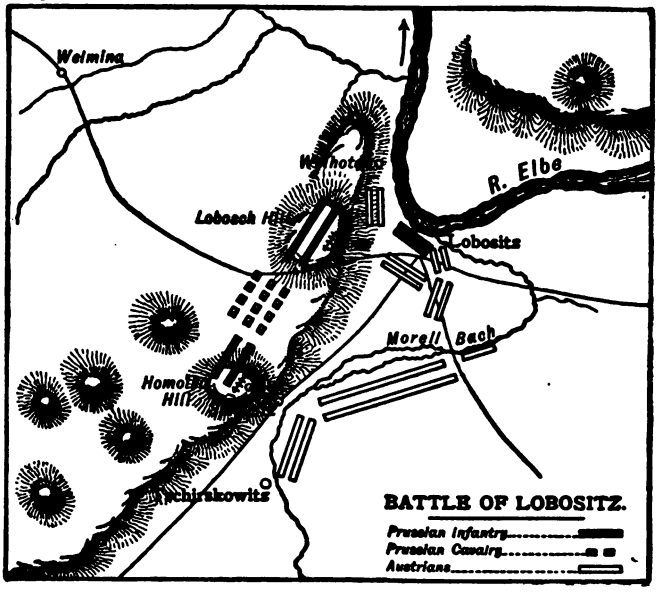
"I suppose we shall not see the king for some time, Marshal," Fergus said later, as Keith was chatting with him.

"On the contrary, he will be with us to-morrow. He rides to-day to have another look at the Saxon position and to give his orders there; he will to-morrow morning join us. It is we who are likely to have the first fighting, for the Austrians must come to the relief of the Saxons, who are shut up as in a trap by our divisions. They made a great mistake in not retiring at once into Bohemia, which they could have done without difficulty had they lost no time. There is no greater mistake than shutting a large force up either in a fortress or an intrenched camp, unless that fortress is an absolute obstacle to an enemy. This is not the case with Pirna. The mountains can be crossed at many other points, and by leaving five or six thousand men in a strong position at the end of each defile we could disregard them altogether and march on southward. They have already been three weeks there, and we believe that they cannot hold out very much longer. However, it is probable that they may be able to do so until an Austrian force comes up and tries to relieve them.

"From what we hear two armies have already entered Bohemia, and we may expect that our first battle will not be far distant."

"Do we block the only line of retreat, sir?" Fergus asked.

"No, indeed. We do not absolutely close the direct road, but our position and that of Marshal Schwerin facing Königgrätz so menaces their line of retreat that they dare not venture from their shelter, and our cavalry render it impossible for any supplies to be thrown in unless the convoy is supported by an army. There are, we know, paths across the hills by



which infantry might effect a passage, but as there is nowhere a place for them to retire to, we should easily overtake them and force them to surrender. No, their only hope is in the coming of relief."

A few hours later the king himself rode in. In the evening orders were issued that a force of cavalry and infantry were to march at daylight, and that the rest of the army were to

follow two hours later. It was soon known that the king had received news that Marshal Browne, an Irish officer of great distinction, who commanded the Austrian force gathered at Budin on the Eger, was expecting the arrival of artillery and pontoons from Vienna in the course of a day or two, and was preparing to cross the river. It was evident, then, that his intention was to relieve the Saxon army in the first place.

The roads through the defiles were very heavy and difficult, but that afternoon the advance force reached Termitz. Late in the evening the rest of the army arrived there.

A squadron of cavalry had been sent off as soon as the vanguard arrived to ascertain the movements of the enemy, and they returned at ten at night with information that the Austrians had crossed the Eger that day and were to encamp at Lobositz. The army at once moved on across the mountains, and after a very difficult and fatiguing march arrived near Lobositz, and lay down for some hours in the order in which they had marched, taking up their position as soon as it was light. The infantry were in two lines; their left was posted on a steep hill known as the Lobosch, part of whose lower slopes extended to the village of Lobositz. A battery with infantry supports took post on a hill called Homolka, which commanded the whole plain between the two armies; the centre stretched across the valley between those hills.

On the low hill on which stood the little town the Austrians had thrown up intrenchments and posted a very strong artillery force, whose fire would sweep a greater portion of the Prussian position. Except at this point the ground between the two armies was low and swampy. The Austrian force was greatly superior in numbers, consisting of 72 squadrons of horse, 52 battalions of infantry, and 98 guns; while the Prussians had 55 squadrons, 26 battalions, and 102 guns. It was evident to both commanders that the village of Lobositz was

the decisive point, and indeed the nature of the ground was such as to render operations almost impossible in the marshy plain intersected by rivulets, which in many places formed large ponds.

At seven in the morning the Prussian action began by a heavy fire between the left on the slopes of Lobosch and 4,000 Croats and several battalions of Hungarians scattered among the vineyards, and the stone walls dividing them. A heavy fog covered the whole country, and until a full view could be obtained of the position of the enemy neither of the commanders deemed it prudent to move.

At twelve o'clock, however, the fog began to clear up. The main body of the Austrians was still invisible, and the king, seeing but a comparatively small force in the plain near Lobositz, thought that this must be the rear-guard of the Austrians, who, he imagined, having found the line by which they intended to succour the Saxons occupied in force, had retired, having thrown up batteries and left a strong force at Lobositz to prevent the Prussians from advancing. To ascertain this twenty squadrons of cavalry were ordered to advance, but on doing so they were received by so tremendous a fire from the batteries of the village, and from others at Sulowitz, another village in the plain on their right, that they fell back with much loss, pursued by the Austrian cavalry.

By the time they had resumed their positions behind the infantry the fog had entirely lifted, and the king and Marshal Keith obtained a full view of the Austrian position from the spot where they had stationed themselves on the hill. They agreed that no attack could be made against the enemy's centre or left, and that they could be assailed only on their right. The troops on the Lobosch Hill were, therefore, largely reinforced, and the whole army advanced, inclining towards the left so as to attack Lobositz from the side of the plain as well

as from that of the mountain. A tremendous artillery fire from the guns on the hills heralded the advance. The troops on the Lobosch Hill made their way forward rapidly. The ground was so steep that they commanded a view down into the vineyard, and their fire was so heavy that the Croats and Hungarians fell as fast as they raised their heads above the stone walls to fire; and although General Browne reinforced them by some of the best Austrian infantry, they were rapidly driven down towards Lobositz.

At the foot of the hill they were supported by several more battalions brought from the Austrian centre. General Lacy, who commanded these, was wounded. The Prussians halted at the foot of the slope and were re-formed, having fallen into some disorder from the irregular nature of the ground over which they had been fighting; the guns were brought forward so as to cover their next advance, while a very strong force was sent to support the batteries on the Homolka Hill, so as to check the enemy's centre and left, should they attempt any movement across the plain. In the meantime Marshal Browne was reinforcing the defenders of Lobositz with the whole of his right wing. The village was defended with desperate bravery, but owing to the position, the king was able to reinforce the assailants very much more rapidly than the Austrian commander could bring up his distant troops. The Prussian artillery concentrated their fire upon the place, and set it in flames from end to end, when its defenders were forced to abandon it and retreat with precipitation on their cavalry.

In order to cover their withdrawal the Austrian left moved down to the village of Sulowitz and endeavoured to pass the dam over a marshy rivulet in front of it, but the fire from the battery on the Homolka rendered it impossible for them to form and also set that village on fire, and they were therefore called back. The Austrian centre moved to its right and oc-

cupied the ground behind Lobositz as soon as the defenders of the village had fallen back, and then Marshal Browne formed up his whole force afresh. His position was now as strong as it had been when the battle first began, for the Prussians could not advance except between the swampy ground and the river, and would have been exposed while doing so to the fire of batteries both in front and in flank. The Austrians were still greatly superior in numbers, and all the advantages that had been gained might have been lost by a renewal of the action.

The total loss in killed, wounded, and prisoners on the part of the Austrians was 3,308; that of the Prussians was about the same. Although indecisive—and indeed claimed as a victory by both parties—the consequences showed that the advantage lay with the Prussians. Marshal Browne's object had been to relieve the Saxons, Frederick's to prevent this, and for the moment he had wholly succeeded. On the other hand was the fact that Marshal Browne had drawn off his army practically intact, and that it was impossible for the king to winter in Bohemia, as he would have done had the Austrian army been defeated and dispersed; and the latter were still in a position to make a fresh attempt to rescue the Saxons.

To prevent this the king despatched the Duke of Bevern with a large force, as if to get between the Austrians and the river Eger. This movement had the desired effect; Marshal Browne at once fell back, recrossed the river, and took up his position at his former camp at Budin. From there he opened communications with the Saxons, and it was arranged that these should pass the Elbe, and that he, with 8,000 men, should also do so and march to meet them. The Saxons, however, were detained owing to the terrible weather and the enormous difficulty of the defiles, and only crossed on the 13th. In the meantime the Prussians had taken up positions to cut off the Saxon retreat, and after crossing they found themselves hemmed

in and the roads so commanded by newly erected batteries, that, being utterly exhausted by fatigue and hardships, they had no resource but to surrender. The terms enforced were hard, the officers were allowed to depart on giving their parole not to serve again, but the whole of the rank and file were incorporated in the Prussian army.

Fergus Drummond and Lindsay stood by their horses with the other members of the staff, some short distance behind the king and Marshal Keith, as they anxiously endeavoured to discover the whereabouts and intentions of the Austrian army, while the crack of musketry between the Croats and the troops, who were gradually pressing them down the hill, continued unabated.

"This is slow work, Drummond," Lindsay said, as hour after hour passed. "I should not like to have anything to do with the king just at present. It is easy to see how fidgety he is, and no wonder. For aught we know there may be only three or four thousand men facing us, and while we are waiting here the whole Austrian army may have crossed over again and be marching up the river-bank to form a junction with the Saxons, or they may have gone by the defiles we traversed the last two days, and may come down into Saxony and fall on the rear of our camp, watching Pirna, while the Saxons are attacking in front. No wonder his Majesty paces backwards and forwards like a wild beast in a cage."

From time to time an aide-de-camp was sent off with some order involving the movement of a battalion farther to the right or left, and the addition of a few guns to the battery on Homolka Hill. Fergus had taken his turn in carrying the orders. He had, two days before, abandoned his sling, and scarcely felt any inconvenience from the wound, which indeed would have been of slight consequence had it not been for the excessive loss of blood.

"These movements mean nothing," Lindsay said, as he returned from one of these rides. "The marshal makes the changes simply for the sake of doing something—partly, perhaps, to take the king's attention off this confounded delay, partly to interest the troops, who must be just as restless and impatient as we are."

The messages were taken alternately by the king's aides-de-camp and the marshal's. At length, as the fog began to lift, the interest in the scene heightened. The king and Keith talked long and earnestly together as they watched the village of Lobositz.

"They have got some strong batteries there," Lindsay said, "but as far as one can see there does not appear to be any large body of troops. I suppose it is meant that the troops on the slopes shall retire there, and make a strong stand. I am bound to say that it looks very much as if Browne had only left a strong guard here to keep us from issuing from this defile, and that his whole army moved away last night, and may now be some thirty miles away on their march towards Saxony."

As the fog lifted still more they could see the stream running right across the plain, and the little village of Sulowitz on its bank apparently still and deserted. Presently Keith wrote an order on a tablet, and Lindsay was sent off with it to the general commanding the cavalry.

"Something is going to be done at last, Drummond," he said, as he mounted. "It is an order to the cavalry."

An order was then despatched to the battery on Homolka Hill and to the batteries on the left. Two more battalions of infantry then moved up to press the Croats more quickly down the hill. Fergus watched Lindsay, and saw him ride up to the general. Several officers at once galloped off; there was a movement among the cavalry, and then twenty squadrons passed out through the intervals between the brigades of

infantry and trotted out through the mouth of the valley. They went on without interruption until abreast of Lobositz, and then a great number of men ran suddenly up from the houses of the village to the batteries. A minute later some thirty guns poured their fire into the Prussian cavalry, while at the same moment the guns of a heavy battery hitherto unseen poured in their fire from Sulowitz on their left flank, while from rising ground not visible behind it came the roar of thirty more pieces.

So rapidly had the aides-de-camp been sent off that Fergus was the only one remaining available. The king spoke a few words to the marshal, and then said to Fergus:

"Ride, sir, with my orders to the officer commanding the cavalry out there, and tell him to retire at once."

Fergus ran back to where Karl was holding his horse. "Follow me, Karl," he said, as he sprang into the saddle, and then rode rapidly down the steep hill; and as soon as he reached the valley, dashed off at a headlong gallop.

"I have orders, Karl, to recall the cavalry, who will be destroyed unless they return. Should I fall, carry the order to their commander."

The din was now prodigious. The whole of the Prussian batteries had opened on Lobositz and Sulowitz, and between the thunder of the guns came the incessant crackling of musketry on the hill to his right. Passing through the infantry, Fergus dashed across the plain. He was mounted on the horse the marshal had given him, as the other was not yet accustomed to stand fire. The noble animal, as if delighted to be on level ground again, and excited by the roar of battle, carried him along at the top of its speed without any need of urging. Fergus knew that on the heights behind, the king and Keith would be anxiously watching him, for the peril of the cavalry was great, and the concussion of the guns was now

causing the fog to lift rapidly; and as he rode he could dimly make out dark masses of men all along the rising ground behind Sulowitz, and knew that the Austrian cavalry might at any moment sweep down on the Prussians.

He was drawing abreast of Lobositz, when suddenly a squadron of cavalry dashed out from the village. Their object was evidently to cut him off, and prevent any message that he might bear reaching the Prussian cavalry, which were now halted half a mile ahead. Their officers were endeavouring to re-form them from the confusion into which they had fallen from the speed at which they had ridden, and the heavy losses they had sustained. He saw at once that the Austrians would cross his line, and reined in his horse to allow Karl to come up to him. Had not the trooper been exceptionally well mounted he would have been left far behind. As it was, while pressing his charger to the utmost, he was still some fifty yards in rear of Fergus. As soon as he came up, the latter said: "We must cut our way through the Austrians; ride close to me. We will ease our horses a little until we are within fifty yards, and then go at them at full speed. If I fall and you get through, carry the orders to retire to the general commanding the cavalry."

The Austrian cavalry had formed up in two troops, one twenty yards behind the other, and each in line two deep extending across the road by which Fergus was riding. Seeing by the speed at which he was travelling that the Prussian staff officer had no intention of surrendering, the Austrian in command gave the order to charge when they were some fifty yards away.

"Now, Karl, boot to boot, go right at them;" and with pistols in their left hands and their swords in their right, they sent their horses at full speed against the enemy. These had scarcely got into motion when, like a thunderbolt, Fergus and

"NOT A BLOW WAS STRUCK, HORSE AND RIDER WENT DOWN BEFORE THEM"

his orderly burst down upon them. The shock was irresistible. Their horses were much heavier and more powerful than those of the Austrians, and their weight and impetus carried all before them. Not a blow was struck, horse and rider went down before them, or were swept aside. They were scarcely conscious that they were through before they encountered the second line.

Here the fight was much more severe. Fergus cut down two of his opponents, and with a pistol-shot rid Karl of an antagonist who was pressing him hard, and after a minute of wild confusion they were through the line and riding at headlong speed towards the Prussians. Pistols cracked out behind them, but before the Austrians had time to turn and aim they were already fifty yards away, and going at a speed that soon left their pursuers behind. As soon as the latter saw this they drew off, and trotted back to Lobositz.

Fergus rode up to the officer commanding the cavalry.

"I bear the king's orders to you, General, to retire at once with your command."

It was time, for a body of Austrian cavalry of much greater strength could be seen galloping towards them from the high ground half a mile distant. In half a minute the Prussians were in motion, but as they returned, the storm of fire from the two villages burst out again with redoubled violence. Men and horses rolled over, but closing up quickly, the squadrons swept on. The general remained stationary until his last squadron thundered by, and then galloped forward again and took his place at their head. Fergus had followed him, when there was a sudden crash, and he was thrown with tremendous force over his horse's head, and there lay stunned with the shock.

When he recovered he staggered to his feet, and saw that he was surrounded by Austrian cavalry, these having

halted just where he fell, as pursuit of the Prussians was hopeless, and the balls from the Prussian batteries were falling thick.

"You are our prisoner, sir," an officer said to him.

"So I see," Fergus said, bitterly. "It is hard luck just at the beginning of the campaign."

"It is the fortune of war," the Austrian said with a smile; "and indeed, I don't think that you have any reason to grumble, for had that shot struck a few inches farther back it would have carried off both your legs."

A sharp order was now given to retire. One of the troopers was ordered to give his horse to Fergus, and to mount behind a comrade, and they rode back to the Austrian main position on the rising ground. Fergus was at once taken to the marshal in command of the Austrians.

"What is your name, sir?" the latter asked.

"Fergus Drummond. I have the honour to be an aide-de-camp on Marshal Keith's staff."

"A Scotchman, I suppose," the marshal said, breaking into English.

"Yes, sir."

"What force is there opposed to us?"

"That I cannot say, sir. I only joined the army two days ago, and have been on the march ever since."

"Who is its commander?"

"Marshal Keith, sir; but the king himself is with it."

"I will see that you are made comfortable presently, Mr. Drummond. Captain Wingratz, will you conduct this officer to the rear, and place a couple of soldiers to see that he is not annoyed or interfered with in any way."

Fergus was led away. Captain Wingratz called up two troopers and, choosing an elevated spot of ground, told them to dismount and allow no one to speak to the officer. "From

here," he said, courteously, to Drummond, "you will get a view of the field of battle."

Fergus sat down on the grass and remained a spectator of the fight to the end of the day. He marked at once that the combat had rolled down the hill, and that the Prussians were making their way in force towards Lobositz. Then he saw heavy masses of infantry from the Austrian right move forward to aid in its defence. For two hours the battle raged round the village, the whole of the guns on both sides aiding in the fight, then volumes of smoke and flame rose and the Austrians were seen retiring. Sulowitz still kept up a heavy fire, and he saw a strong body from the Austrian left move down there, while the centre advanced to cover the retreat of the defenders of Lobositz, and to check the advancing masses of the Prussians, and he thought for a time that a general engagement was about to take place. Then he saw the Prussian advance cease, the roar of cannon gradually died away, and the battle was at an end. For an hour he remained apparently unnoticed, then Captain Wingratz rode up with another officer.

"I am sorry to have neglected you so long, Lieutenant Drummond, but you see it was the fault of your own people who have kept us so busy. This is Lieutenant Kerr, a compatriot of yours, who will take special charge of you."

"I am sorry that our meeting cannot take place under more favourable circumstances," Kerr said, holding out his hand. "It might well have been the other way. Now come with me to my tent. I have no doubt that you are hungry; I can assure you that I am."

The two walked together for about a quarter of a mile, the Austrian officer having left as soon as he had introduced them.

"There were three of us here this morning," Kerr said, as they entered the tent. "The other two are missing. One I

know is killed, the other badly wounded, but whether he is dead or a prisoner I cannot say. By the way, are you not the officer who cut his way through the squadron of our regiment, and went on and joined your cavalry, who at once fell back? I was in Lobositz myself; my squadron was not ordered out. As I hear that you were found by our cavalry as they followed the Prussians, it struck me that it might be you, although from Lobositz we could only see that it was a staff uniform that the officer wore."

"Yes, it was I. I was carrying an order for the cavalry to retire."

"That was what we supposed, as soon as you were seen coming down the valley, and as it would have suited us much better for the Prussian cavalry to have stayed where it was for a little longer, the general sent out a squadron to intercept you. It was a splendid thing to do on your part. Of course, there were a number of us watching from the earth-works, and I can assure you that there was a general inclination to cheer as you cut your way through our fellows. I am sure that if I had known that it was a countryman I should have done it, though the action was at the expense of my own regiment. Our squadron suffered heavily as they rode back again, for that battery from the Homolka turned its attention to them as soon as you had gone through. They had an officer and nearly thirty men killed and wounded before they got back into shelter. How long have you been out here?"

"Only about two months."

"Really! You are lucky in getting on Keith's staff."

"He is a cousin of my mother's," Fergus said.

"And he made you lieutenant and aide-de-camp at once?"

"No; I was first a cornet, but I was promoted at Dresden. The king had given strict orders about plundering, and it happened that I came upon some marauders at their

work and had the good fortune to rescue a gentleman of some importance from their hands, and the king, who was furious at his orders being disobeyed, himself promoted me. I had been lucky enough to get myself wounded in the affair. As I lost a good deal of blood I looked no doubt a good deal worse than I was, and I expect that had a good deal to do with my getting the step."

"Well, you are a lucky fellow. I was eight years a cornet before I got promoted."

"I think my bad luck in getting captured balances my good fortune in being promoted so soon."

"To some extent perhaps it does, but you will get the benefit when you return. No doubt Fritz was watching you as you rode; he must have seen our cavalry coming down the slope before the man in command of your squadrons could have done so, and must have felt that they were lost unless his orders were received. He must have been relieved indeed when he saw you reach them."

This had indeed been the case. The king and marshal had both been watching through their glasses the Prussian cavalry, and marked how the ground behind them was dotted thickly with the bodies of horses and men.

"Will they never stop?" the king said, impatiently. "These cavalrymen are always getting into scrapes with their impetuosity. Gorlitz must have known that he was only sent forward to ascertain the position of the Austrians, and not to fight their whole army. He ought to have turned as soon as that cross fire of their batteries opened upon them."

"He knew that your Majesty and the whole army would be watching him, sire," Keith said, quietly, "and I fancy that, under such circumstances, few cavalrymen would draw rein till they had done something worthy of themselves."

At this moment the fog-wreath moved away.

"See!" the king exclaimed, "there is a great body of Austrian cavalry moving along behind Sulowitz. That rise behind the village must hide them from our men. Where is your messenger, Keith?"

"There he goes, sire; he is well out of the valley now, and by the pace he is riding at he won't be long before he reaches them."

"He won't reach them at all," the king said, curtly, a minute later. "See, there is a squadron of horse riding out from Lobositz to cut him off. No doubt they guess what his errand is."

"I see them, sire, and he must see them too. He is checking his horse, for his orderly is coming up to him."

"Then the cavalry will be lost," the king said. "The enemy's batteries are playing havoc with them, and they will have the Austrians down upon them in a few minutes. Ah! I expect Gorlitz sees them now; our men are halting and forming up. I suppose he means to charge the Austrians when they come up, but there are three to one against him. He is lost."

"There is hope yet, sire," Keith said, as he again turned his glass on Fergus; "my aide-de-camp is going to charge the Austrian squadron."

"So he is," the king exclaimed, lowering his glass, for the distance was little more than half a mile from the spot where he stood. "He must be mad."

"It is possible he may do it, sire; his orderly is riding boot to boot beside him. You know already that he is a good swordsman. He will have the advantage that the enemy won't dream of his attacking them, and the rate at which they are riding will help them through. There he goes," and he raised the glass again to his eye. "Bravo! they are

through the first troop and still together. Now they are at it. There, sire, they are through the second troop. Bravo, Fergus!"

The king made no remark until he saw the Austrian squadron draw rein, then he said:

"Thank God, he has saved the cavalry. It was a glorious deed. Marshal Keith, make out his commission as a captain to-day."

"He is very young, sire," the marshal said, hesitatingly.

"By heaven, sir, I would promote him if he were an infant in arms," the king replied. "Why, Keith, the loss of half our cavalry would have crippled us, and cavalrymen are not made in a day. There, he has reached them now. I see they are wheeling. Well and quickly done! Yes, they won't be overtaken; but three minutes later, and not a man would have come back. Colonel Rogner," he said to one of the group of officers behind him, "you will please ride down and meet the cavalry when they come in, and convey to Lieutenant Drummond my highest satisfaction at the gallant manner in which he has carried out my orders. You will also inform General Gorlitz that in my opinion he pushed his reconnaissance much too far, but that I am well content with the bravery shown by the troops, and at the manner in which he drew them off on receipt of my order."

In five-and-twenty minutes the colonel returned and said:

"I regret to say, your Majesty, that Lieutenant Drummond is missing. I have inquired among the officers, and find that as he was following General Gorlitz he and his horse suddenly pitched forward and lay without movement. Evidently the horse was killed by a cannon-shot, but whether Mr. Drummond was also killed they could not say."

"We must hope not," the king said, warmly. "I would not lose so gallant a young officer for a great deal. Keith, if

we take Lobositz to-day, let a most careful search be made over the ground the cavalry passed for his body. If it is found, so much the worse; if not, it will be a proof that he is either wounded or unhurt, and that he has been carried off by the Austrian cavalry who passed over the same ground as ours, and who certainly would not trouble themselves to carry off his body."

CHAPTER VI

A PRISONER

THE next morning a horse was brought round for Fergus, and he at once started under the escort of a captain, and Lieutenant Kerr and fifty troopers, with thirteen other officers taken prisoners at Lobositz. Seven hundred rank and file had also been captured. These, however, were to march under an infantry escort on the following day. Fergus afterwards learned that sixteen officers, of whom eleven belonged to the cavalry, had been killed, and eighty-one officers and about eighteen hundred men wounded, in the desperate fighting at Lobositz.

Fergus found that among the Austrians the battle of the previous day was considered a victory, although they had lost their advanced post at Lobositz.

"I cannot say it seemed so to me," he said to the lieutenant as they rode away from the camp.

"Why, we have prevented the king from penetrating into Bohemia."

"But the king could have done that three days ago without fighting a battle," Fergus said, "just as Schwerin did at

Königgrätz. There would have been no need to have marched night and day across the mountains in order to give battle to an army nearly twice the strength of his own. His object was to prevent you from drawing off the Saxons, and in that he perfectly succeeded."

"Oh, there are other ways of doing that. We had only to keep along the other side of the Elbe until we faced Pirna, then they could have joined us."

"It sounds easy," Fergus laughed, "but it would not be so easy to execute. These mountain defiles are terrible, and you may be sure that the king will not be idle while you and the Saxons are marching to meet each other. However, it was a hard-fought battle, and I should think that our loss must be quite as great as yours, for your artillery must have played terrible havoc among our infantry as they marched to the assault of the village."

"Yes. I hear this morning that we have lost about a hundred and twenty officers killed and wounded, and about two thousand one hundred and fifty men, and nearly seven hundred missing or prisoners. What your loss is, of course, I can't say."

"I cannot understand your taking so many prisoners," Fergus said.

"A great many of them belong to the cavalry; you see all who were dismounted by the fire of our guns were captured when our horse swept down."

"Ah, yes; I did not think of that. I saw a good many men running across the plain when I galloped out."

Two of the officers belonged to the 3d Royal Dragoon Guards, half of which regiment had taken part in the reconnaissance, and both their horses, like his own, had been shot under them. As soon as they were brought up from the tents where they had been lodged they exchanged a cordial greet-

ing with Fergus. He no longer belonged to the regiment, as on his promotion he had been gazetted from it on to the staff, but during the time he had drilled with them in Berlin he had come to be well known to all of them.

"I thought that it was you, Lieutenant," one of them said. "I was not far from you when you charged through those Austrians. I was unhorsed as we went forward, and was running back when I saw them come out. There were a good many of us, and I thought their object was to capture us. It was no use running, and I threw myself down in hopes they would think I had been knocked over. You passed within thirty yards of me. Our guns opened so heavily on them after you had got through that I thought it prudent to keep quiet a little longer before I made a move, and the result was that the Austrian cavalry, as it came along in the pursuit of our men, picked me up. Do you know where we are bound for?"

"Prague in the first instance, but beyond that I cannot say. I suppose it will depend a good deal on what takes place now. There is no doubt the Saxons will have to surrender, and I suppose that, anyhow, they will send us farther away, unless indeed there is an exchange of prisoners."

A long day's ride took them to Prague. The news of the battle had been sent off the night before, and as it had been reported as a victory, the inhabitants were in a state of great delight; bonfires blazed in the streets, church bells rang in triumphant peals, and the whole population was abroad. The arrival of this party with prisoners afforded a welcome confirmation of the news. There were a few yells and hoots as they rode along in charge of their escort, but as a rule the people stood silent as if in respect for their misfortunes, for most of the captives were wounded. They were taken to the military prison and comfortable quarters assigned to them,

and the wounds of those who required it were redressed by a surgeon. There was a hearty parting between Fergus and Kerr as the latter, after handing over his prisoners, turned to ride off with the escort to the barracks.

"I start early to-morrow for the camp again," he said. "If you are kept here I am sure to see you again before long."

Fergus shared a room with Captain Hindeman, an officer of the 3d.

"I don't think it at all likely we shall remain here," the latter said. "It is more probable that we shall be sent to Olmütz or to one of the smaller fortresses in Moravia. The war is, they will think, likely to be confined to Bohemia until the spring, if indeed the king does not have to stand on the defensive. I cannot help thinking myself that we should have done better if we had let things go on quietly till the spring. It is not probable that Russia and Austria would have been more ready then than they are now, and we should have had the whole summer before us, and might have marched to Vienna before the campaign was over. Now they will all have the winter to make their preparations, and we shall have France, Austria, and Russia, to say nothing of Poland, on our hands. It is a tremendous job even for Frederick to tackle."

They remained for three weeks at Prague and were then informed by the governor that he had orders for them to be removed to Olmütz. Accordingly, the next day eight of the officers started on horseback under an escort. When they reached Brünn they found that they were to be separated, and the next morning Captain Hindeman and Fergus were taken to the fortress of Spielberg.

"An awkward place either to get in or out of, Drummond," the captain said as they approached the fortress.

"Very much so," Fergus agreed. "But if I see a chance, I shall certainly do my best to escape before spring."

"I don't think there is much chance of that," the other said, gloomily. "If we had been left at Prague, or even at Brünn, there might have been some chance, but in these fortresses, where everything is conducted on a very severe system, and they are veritable prisons, I don't think that anything without wings has a chance of getting away."

As a rule, officers taken prisoners in war enjoyed a considerable amount of liberty, and were even allowed to reside in the houses of citizens on giving their parole. The enforced embodiment of the Saxons in the Prussian army had, however, excited such a storm of indignation throughout Europe that it greatly damaged Frederick's cause. It was, indeed, an unheard-of proceeding and a most mistaken one, for the greater part of the Saxons seized opportunities to desert as soon as the next campaign began. It was the more ill-advised since Saxony was a Protestant country, and therefore the action alienated the other Protestant princes in Germany, whose sympathies would have otherwise been wholly with Prussia, and it was to no small extent due to that high-handed action that during the winter the Swedes joined the Confederacy, and undertook to supply an army of 50,000 men, France paying a subsidy towards their maintenance, and the members of the Confederacy agreeing that, upon the division of Prussia, Pomerania should fall to the share of Sweden. Thus it may be said that the whole of Central and Northern Europe, with the exception only of Hanover, was leagued against Prussia.

It was a result of this general outburst of indignation that, instead of being kept in a large town and allowed various privileges, the prisoners taken at the battle of Lobositz were treated with exceptional severity and confined in isolated fortresses. Fergus and his companion were lodged in a small room in one of the towers. The window was strongly barred, the floor was of stone, the door massive and studded with

iron. Two truckle-beds, a table, and two chairs formed the sole furniture.

"Not much chance of an escape here," Captain Hindeman said, as the door closed behind their guards.

"The prospect does not look very bright, I admit," Fergus said, cheerfully, "but we have a proverb, 'Where there is a will, there is a way.' I have the will certainly, and as we have plenty of time before us it will be hard if we do not find a way." He went to the window and looked out. "Over a hundred feet," he said, "and I should say a precipice fully as deep at the foot of the wall. At any rate, we have the advantage of an extensive view. I am glad to see that there is a fireplace, for the cold will be bitter here when the winter sets in. I wonder whether the rooms above and below this are tenanted?"

Hindeman shrugged his shoulders; he was not at present in a mood to take interest in anything.

It was now the end of October, and Fergus was very glad when the door opened again and a warder came in with two soldiers who carried huge baskets of firewood, and it was not long before a large fire was blazing on the hearth.

Day after day passed. Fergus turned over in his mind every possible method of escape, but the prospect looked very dark. Even if the door were open there would be difficulties of all sorts to encounter. In the middle of the day many people went in and out of the fortress with provisions, wood, and other matters, but at sunset the gates were shut and sentries placed on the walls, and on getting out he would have to cross an inner courtyard and then pass through a gateway—at which a sentinel was posted night and day—into the outer court, which was surrounded by a strong wall over thirty feet high with towers at the angles.

Escape from the window would be equally difficult, two long

and very strong ropes would be required, and the bars of the window were so massive that without tools of any kind it would be impossible to remove them. A month later Captain Hindeman fell ill, and was removed to the infirmary. Fergus was glad of his departure. He had been so depressed that he was useless as a companion, and so long as he remained there he altogether prevented any plan of escape being attempted, for, difficult as it might be for one person to get away, it would be next to impossible for two to do so.

For an hour in the day the prisoners had leave to walk on the wall. His fellow-prisoner had never availed himself of this privilege, but Fergus always took his daily exercise, partly to keep himself in health, partly in hopes that a plan of escape might present itself. A sentry, however, was always posted on the wall while the prisoners were at exercise, and on the side allotted for their walk the rock sloped away steeply from the foot of the wall. The thought of escape, therefore, in broad daylight was out of the question, and Fergus generally watched what was going on in the courtyard.

In time he came to know which was the entrance to the apartments of the governor and his family; where the married officers were quartered; and where the soldiers lodged. He saw that on the ground floor of the tower he occupied were the quarters of a field-officer belonging to the garrison.

One day he saw a number of men employed in clearing out some unused quarters on one side of the outer courtyard, and judged that an addition was about to be made to the garrison. This gave substance to a plan that he had been revolving in his mind. That evening, when the warder brought him his food, he said, carelessly: "I see you have some more troops coming in."

"Yes," the man replied, "there are three hundred more men coming; they will march in to-morrow afternoon. They

"AS THE MAN WAS PLACING HIS SUPPER ON THE TABLE FERGUS SPRANG UPON HIM"

will be getting the room on the first floor below here cleared out to-morrow morning for the officer who commands them."

Fergus had all along considered that there would be no difficulty in suddenly attacking and overpowering the warder when he came in or out of his room, for no special precautions were taken. The fact that the prisoners were all in their uniforms, and that on showing themselves below they would be instantly arrested, seemed to forbid all chance of their making any attempt to escape. It was the matter of clothes that had, more than anything else, puzzled Fergus, for although he thought that he might possibly obtain a uniform from some officer's quarters, it was evident that the guard would at once perceive that he was not one of the officers of the garrison. The arrival of the fresh detachment relieved him of this difficulty, and it now seemed that a way of escape was open to him.

Much depended upon the hour at which the regiment would arrive. The later they did so the better, and as the weather had for some days been terribly rough and the roads would be deep and heavy, it was likely that they would not arrive until some time past the hour fixed. The next afternoon he listened for the roll of drums that would greet the arrival of the new-comers. Just as the door opened and the sergeant entered with a lantern, he heard the sound that he had been listening for. Nothing could have happened more fortunately. As the man was placing his supper on the table Fergus sprang suddenly upon him, hurled him down on to his face, and then fastened his hands behind him with a rope he had made from twisted strips of one of his rugs. He was not afraid of his calling out, as the window looked outside, and it was blowing half a gale; moreover, the sound of drums below would aid to prevent any noise being heard from the courtyard.

"I don't want to hurt you, sergeant," he said, "but I do want my liberty. I must put a bandage round your mouth to prevent you from calling, but you know as well as I do that there would be no chance of your being heard, however loud you might shout. Now, in the first place I am going to see if I can get a uniform; if I cannot, I must come back and take yours."

Binding the sergeant's legs as well as his arms, and putting a muffler over his mouth, Fergus went out, leaving his own jacket and cap behind him. The key was in the door, he turned it and put it in his pocket, shot the heavy bolts and ran downstairs. When he got to the bottom he tried the door of the major's quarters; it was unbolted, and he felt absolutely certain that the major would be out, as with the other officers he would have gone down to the gate to receive those of the incoming detachment. On opening the door he saw the articles of which he was in search—a long cloak and a regimental cap; these he at once put on. After a further search he found a pair of military pantaloons and a patrol jacket. Throwing off the cloak, he rapidly changed his clothes. He wanted now only a regimental sword to complete the costume, but he trusted to the long cloak to hide the absence of this.

Throwing the things that he had taken off under the bed, he went out, closed the door behind him, locked it, and took the key. He had with him the short sword carried by the warder, and he relied upon this to silence the sentry at the passage leading to the outer court should he attempt to stop him. This, however, was most unlikely. The night was dark and there was no light burning, and at this hour, with fresh troops arriving and a general movement in the fortress, there could be no question of a countersign being demanded by a sentry in the interior of the place. The man, indeed, only

drew himself up and saluted, as he dimly made out an officer coming from the major's quarters. The courtyard beyond was half full of soldiers. The new-comers had just fallen out; some were being greeted by members of the garrison who had known them before, officers were chatting together, and Fergus made his way, unnoticed in the darkness, to the gate. As he had hoped, the baggage waggons were making their way in.

A sentry was placed on each side of the gate.

"Now, then," he said, sharply, "hurry on with these waggons, the commandant wants the gate shut as soon as possible," and passing the sentry, he went on as if to hurry up the rear of the train. Taking him for one of the officers of the newly arrived party, the sentry stepped back at once and he passed out. There were six waggons still outside, and unnoticed he passed these and went down the road. He had brought with him under his cloak the sergeant's lantern, and as soon as he was half a mile from the fortress he took this out in order to be able to proceed the more rapidly. He had taken particular notice of the country from his prison window, and when he came down into a broad road running along the valley he turned at once to the south.

His plans had all been carefully thought out while in prison. He knew perfectly well that without money it would be altogether impossible for him to traverse the many hundred miles that lay between him and Saxony. There would be a hot pursuit when in the morning he was found to have gone, but it would hardly be suspected that he had taken the road for Vienna, as this would be entirely out of his way. Happily he was not altogether penniless. He had always carried five or six gold pieces sewn up in the lining of his jacket, with the letters with which he had been furnished by Count Eulenfurst, as a resource in case of being taken prisoner. He wished

now that he had brought more, but he thought that it might prove sufficient for his first needs.

He walked all night. His candle burnt out in two hours after starting, but at eleven the moon rose, and its light enabled him to keep the road without difficulty. As morning dawned he approached a good-sized village some forty miles from his starting-point, and, waiting for an hour until he saw people stirring, Fergus went to the posting-house and shouted for the postmaster. The sight of a field officer on foot at such an hour of the morning greatly surprised the man when he came down.

"My horse has fallen and broken its neck," Fergus said, "and I have had to walk some miles on foot. I have important despatches to carry to Vienna; bring round a horse without a moment's delay."

The postmaster, without the smallest hesitation, ordered his men to saddle and bring out a horse.

"It will be sent back from the next stage," Fergus said, as he mounted and rode on at full speed. He changed horses twice, not the slightest suspicion being entertained by any of the postmasters that he was not what he seemed, and before noon arrived at the last post-house before reaching Vienna.

"A bottle of your best wine, landlord, and I want to speak a word with you in a private room. Bring two glasses."

The wine was poured out, and after he had drank a glass Fergus said: "Landlord, I am the bearer of important despatches, and it is imperative that I should not attract attention as I enter the city. If I were seen and recognized there, questions might be asked, and curiosity excited as to the news of which I am the bearer. I see that you are a sensible man, and will readily understand the situation; to avoid attracting attention, it would be best for me to enter the city in a civilian dress. You are about my size, and I beg you to

furnish me with a suit of your clothes, for which I will pay at once."

"I will do that willingly, sir," the landlord answered, feeling much honoured by being let into what he deemed an important affair. "My best suit is at your service. You can send it me out from the town."

"I would rather pay for it, landlord. I may be ordered in another direction, and may not have an opportunity of returning it. If you will say how much the suit cost you I will hand you the money."

The landlord went out and returned in a minute with the clothes.

"Another glass of wine, landlord," Fergus said, as he handed over the amount at which the landlord valued them—"another glass of wine, and then, while I am changing, get a light trap round to the door. I shall not want to take it into Vienna, but will alight and send it back again half a mile this side of the gates. Mind, should any inquiries be made, it were best to say as little as possible."

In another five minutes Fergus was on his way again. He had procured from the landlord a small trunk in which he had packed the uniform, and directed him to keep it until he heard from him, but if in the course of a week he received no orders, he was to forward it to Major Steiner at Spielberg. When within half a mile of Vienna Fergus got out, gave a present to the driver and told him to return, and then walked forward to the gate, which he entered without question. He thought it better not to put up in that quarter of the town, but walked a long distance through the city, purchased a travelling coat lined with sheep-skin and a small canvas trunk in which he put it, went some distance farther and hired a room at a quiet inn, and called for dinner, of which he felt much in need, for beyond eating a few mouthfuls of bread

while a fresh horse was brought out for him, he had tasted nothing since the previous evening. After dining he went to his room and took his boots off, and feeling completely worn out from his long journey, after two months of confinement, threw himself on the bed and slept for three hours. Then he went for an hour's stroll through the town. By this time it was getting dark, snow-flakes were beginning to fall thickly, and he was very glad, after sitting for a time listening to the talk in the parlour of the inn, to turn in for the night. In the morning the ground was covered with snow. He was glad to put on his thick coat, for the cold outside was bitter.

For some hours he walked about Vienna, and the contrast between that city and Berlin struck him greatly. The whole bearing and manner of the people was brighter and gayer. The soldiers, of whom there were great numbers in the streets—Austrians, Croats, and Hungarians—had none of the formal stiffness of the Prussians, but laughed and joked as they went, and seemed as easy and light-hearted as the civilians around them. They were for the most part inferior in size and physique to the Prussians, but there was a springiness in their walk, and an alertness and intelligence which were wanting in the more solid soldier of the north. He spent the day in making himself acquainted with the town, the position of the gates and other particulars which might be important to him, as he could not feel sure of the reception that he would meet with when he presented his letter.

In the afternoon the city was particularly gay. Sledges made their appearance in the streets, and all seemed delighted that winter had set in in earnest. The next morning, after breakfast, Fergus went to the mansion of Count Platurn, whose position he had ascertained on the previous day. The name had been scored under in his list as one on whom he might confidently rely.

"I am the bearer of a letter to Count Platurn," he said to the somewhat gorgeously dressed functionary who opened the door. "I have a message to deliver to him personally."

The door-keeper closed the door behind him and spoke to a footman, who went away, and returned in a minute or two and told Fergus to follow him to a spacious and comfortable library, where the count was sitting alone.

"You are the bearer of a letter to me, sir?" he said in a pleasant tone of voice. "Whence do you bring it?"

"From Count Eulenfurst of Dresden," Fergus said, producing it. The count gave an exclamation of pleasure.

"Has he completely recovered?" he asked. "Of course we heard of the outrage of which he was a sufferer."

"He was going on well when I saw him last, Count."

The count opened the letter and read it with an air of growing surprise as he went on. When he had finished it he rose from his seat and offered his hand to Fergus.

"You are the Scottish officer who saved the lives of the count, his wife, and daughter," he said, warmly. "How you come to be here I don't know, but it is enough for me that you rendered my dear friend and his wife, who is a cousin of mine, this great service. You are not here, I hope, on any mission which, as an Austrian noble, I could feel it impossible to further."

"No, indeed, Count. Had it been so I should assuredly not have presented this letter to you. In giving it to me, the countess said that possibly the fortune of war might be unfavourable, and that I might be taken prisoner. In that case she said I might find a friend invaluable, and she gave me letters to eight gentlemen in various great towns, saying that she believed that any one of these would, for the sake of the count, do me any kindness in his power. Her prevision has turned out correct. My horse was shot under me at the bat-

tle of Lobositz, and I was made prisoner and sent to the fortress of Spielberg. Three days since I effected my escape, and deemed it more prudent to make my way here, where no one would suspect me of coming, instead of striving to journey up through Bohemia."

"You effected your escape from Spielberg!" the count repeated in surprise. "That is indeed a notable feat, for it is one of our strongest prisons; but you shall tell me about that presently. Now about Count Eulenfurst. The affair created quite a sensation, partly from the rank and well-known position of the count, partly from the fact that the King of Prussia himself called upon the count to express his sincere regret at what had occurred, and the vigorous steps that he took to put a stop to all acts of pillage and marauding. It was said at the time that had it not been for the opportune arrival of a young Scottish officer, an aide-de-camp to Marshal Keith, the lives of the count and his family would assuredly have been sacrificed, and that the king, in token of his approbation, had promoted the officer upon the spot. But, I pray you, take off that warm coat, and make yourself at home." He touched a bell. A servant entered immediately. "If anyone calls say that I am engaged on business and can see no one this morning. Place two chairs by the fire and bring in wine and glasses."

Two chairs were moved to the fire, wine was placed close at hand on a small table, and the count fetched a box of cigars from his cabinet. Fergus had already adopted the all but universal custom in the German army of smoking.

"Now," the count said, when the cigars were lighted, "tell me all about this affair at Dresden."

Fergus related the facts as modestly as he could.

"No wonder Eulenfurst speaks of you in the highest terms," said the count. "Truly it was nobly done. Six Pomeranian soldiers to a single sword! 'Tis wonderful."

"The chief credit should, as I have said, Count, be given to the maid, but for whose aid matters might have gone quite otherwise."

"Doubtless great credit is due to her, Lieutenant Drummond; but you see you had already defeated three, and I prefer to think that you would have got the better of the others, even if she had not come to your aid. The countess had, I hope, quite recovered at the time you came away, since it is she who writes the letter in his name."

"I think that she had quite recovered. For a few hours the doctors were even more anxious as to her state than that of the count; but the news that he was doing well and might recover did wonders for her, and she was able herself to take part in nursing him two days after he received the wound."

"I saw by the account that my little cousin received the king."

"She did, sir, and bore herself well. It was no doubt a great trial to her so soon after the terrible scene she had passed through; in that she had showed great calmness and presence of mind, and was able to give assistance to her mother as soon as she herself was released from her bonds."

"You were not present yourself?"

"No, sir. My wound was, as I have said, but in the flesh, and was of so little consequence that I did not think to have it bandaged until all other matters were arranged. But when I had made my report to the marshal and begged that a surgeon should be sent instantly to aid the count, I fainted from loss of blood, and it was some days before I was able to ride out to pay my respects to the countess."

"And now tell me about your escape from Spielberg."

This Fergus did.

"It was well managed, indeed," laughed the count. "You seem to be as ready with your wits as with your sword, and

to have provided against every emergency. It was fortunate that you had hidden away those gold pieces with your letters, for otherwise you could hardly have got those clothes from the postmaster. It was a bold stroke indeed to use her Majesty's uniform and the imperial post to further your escape. Now we must think in what way I can best aid you. You will require a stout horse, a disguise, and a well-filled purse. Eulenfurst authorizes me to act as his banker to advance any moneys that you may require. Therefore you need offer me no thanks. What disguise do you yourself fancy?"

"I should think that the dress of a trader travelling on business would be as good as any I could choose."

"Yes, I should think it would."

"I should give myself out as a Saxon merchant," Fergus went on. "In the first place my German, which I learned from a Hanoverian, is near enough to the Saxon to pass muster, and my hair and complexion are common enough in Saxony."

"I will get an official paper from the city authorities, stating that you are one—shall we say Paul Muller, native of Saxony, and draper by trade?—now returning to Dresden. I shall have no difficulty in getting it through one of my own furnishers. I do not say that you could not make your way through without it, but should you be stopped and questioned it would facilitate matters. I will see about it this afternoon. I have simply to say to one of the tradesmen I employ that I am sending an agent through Bohemia to Eulenfurst, and think that in the present disturbed state he had better travel as a trader, and ask him to fill up the official papers and take them to the burgomaster's office to get them signed and stamped. He will do it as a matter of course, seeing that I am a sufficiently good customer of his. A horse I can, of course, supply you with. It must not be too showy, but it should be a strong and serviceable animal, with a fair turn of speed. The

clothes you had perhaps better buy for yourself, together with such things as you can carry in your valises. I would gladly ask you to stay with me here for a while, but having arrived in that dress it might excite remark among the servants were you to appear in a different character. I regret that my wife and family are away at one of my country seats, and will not be back for a week, and I suppose you will not care to linger so long here."

"I thank you, Count, but I should prefer to leave as soon as possible. I do not think that there is really any fear of my being recognized. If they search at all along the Vienna road it is not likely that they will do so as far as this, and certainly they could obtain no news of me for the first forty miles, and would not be likely to push their inquiries as far; for a dismounted field-officer could not but have attracted attention at the first village through which he passed."

"It would be best for you not to change your clothes at the place where you are stopping. I can have everything ready for you by to-morrow morning if you wish to leave at once."

"I should certainly prefer doing so."

"Very well, then. Do you go out by the west gate at nine o'clock, and walk for some four miles. When you find some quiet spot change your clothes, and walk on until within sight of the village of Gulnach, and there wait. I will send a confidential servant with the horse. He, on seeing you standing there, will ask who you are waiting for. You will give my name, and then he will hand over the horse and papers to you." He got up and went to his table and opened a drawer. "Here are a hundred rix-dollars, Mr. Drummond, which I hand you as Count Eulenfurst's banker. It is a matter of pure business."

"I could do with much less than that, sir," Fergus said.

"No, 'tis better to be well supplied. Besides, there are your clothes to buy; and be sure and provide yourself with a good fur-lined travelling cloak. You will need it, I can assure you. Your best course will be to travel through St. Pölten and Ips, cross the river at once, and go over the mountains by the road through Freystadt to Budweis. It is by far the most level road from here, though a good deal longer than the one through Horn. But there is snow in the air, and I think that we shall have a heavy downfall, and you may well find the defiles by the Horn road blocked by snow, whereas by Freystadt you are not likely to find any difficulty, and most of the road is perfectly flat."

CHAPTER VII

FLIGHT

AFTER leaving Count Platurn with the most sincere thanks for his kindness, Fergus went to a clothier's, where he bought clothes suitable for a trader, with warm undergarments, and an ample cloak, lined with warm, though cheap, fur, and carried these to his inn. The rest of the day was spent in strolling about, and in examining the public buildings and Art Galleries. The next morning he paid his reckoning, and taking his small trunk in one hand, and his fur cloak in the other, started, wearing the coat he had first purchased, as he thought that crossing the defiles into Saxony he might very well need that as well as his cloak. As the western gate was the one nearest to his inn, it was not long before he issued out, and walking briskly, came in three-quarters of an hour to a wood.

As there was no one in sight along the road, he turned in here and changed his clothes; then, leaving those he had taken off behind him, he continued on his way, and in less than half an hour approached a village, which he learned from a man he met was Gulnach. He waited by the roadside for a quarter of an hour, and then saw a man galloping towards him, leading a riderless horse. He drew rein as he came up.

"What are you waiting here for?" he asked.

"Platurn," Fergus replied.

"That is right, sir; this is your horse. Here is the letter the count bade me give you, and also this sword," and he unbuckled the one that he wore. "He bade me wish you God-speed."

"Pray tell him that I am sincerely obliged to him for his kindness," Fergus replied, as he buckled on the sword.

The man at once rode off. The saddle was furnished with valises; these contained several articles he had not thought of buying, among them a warm fur cap with flaps for the ears, and a pair of fur-lined riding gloves. He transferred the remaining articles from the little trunk to the valises, and threw the former away, rolled up his cloak and strapped it behind the saddle, and then mounted. He was glad to find in the holsters a brace of double-barrelled pistols, a powder flask, and a bag of bullets, and also a large flask full of spirits.

As he gathered the reins in his hand, he had difficulty in restraining a shout of joy, for, with an excellent horse, good arms, warm clothes, and a purse sufficiently well lined, he felt he was prepared for all contingencies. As he moved on at a walk he opened the count's letter. It contained only a few lines wishing him a safe journey, and begging him to tell Count Eulenfurst that he regretted he could not do more for his messenger to prove his good-will and affection; and also the official document that he had promised to procure for

him. Tearing up the count's letter, and putting the official document carefully in his pocket, he pressed his heel against his horse's flank, and started at a canter. He stopped for the night at Ips, and on the following day rode to Linz. The snow had fallen almost incessantly, and he was glad indeed that he had brought the coat as well as the cloak with him.

The next night he halted at Freystadt. As this was a strongly fortified place commanding the southern exit of the defile from the mountain, he was asked for his papers. The official merely glanced at them and returned them. He was forced to stay here for several days, as he was assured that it would be all but certain death to endeavour to cross the pass in such weather. On the third day the snow ceased falling, and early next morning a force of 500 men, comprising almost the whole of the garrison, started to beat down the snow, and cut a way through the deep drifts. For four days this work continued, the men being assisted by a regiment that was marched down from Budweis, and opened the defile from the northern end. The pass was an important one, as in winter it was the one chiefly used for communication between Bohemia and Vienna, and it was therefore highly important that it should be maintained in a practicable state.

Fergus was in no hurry to proceed ; he knew that there was not the smallest possibility of operations being commenced until the snow disappeared, which might not be until the end of March. He therefore took matters very quietly, keeping entirely indoors as long as the snow continued to fall, and going out as little as possible afterwards. He was glad indeed when the news came that the pass was clear. As soon as the gates were unlocked he pressed on, in order to get ahead of a large convoy of carts laden with warm clothing for the soldiers, that was also waiting for the pass to be opened. In spite of all that had been done it was rough work passing

through the defile, and he did not arrive at Krumnau until nearly sunset. Budweis lay but a few miles farther ahead, but he had made up his mind not to stop there, as it was a large garrisoned town, and the small places suited him better. Passing through the town next day he continued his course along the road near the river Moldau. He made but short journeys, for the snow had not yet hardened, and it was very heavy riding. He, therefore, took four days in getting to Prague.

He thought it probable that here a watch might be kept for him, for had he travelled straight from Spielberg this was the point for which, in all probability, he would have made, unless he had gone through Silesia, and then travelled up through Breslau. He therefore made a circuit of the picturesque old city, entered it by a western gate, and then rode straight for the bridge. He had slept at a place but four miles distant, and had started at daybreak, so that it was still early in the day when he proceeded on his way. He stopped at a small town ten miles farther north. Two or three squadrons of cavalry were quartered there. The landlord at the inn where he put up at once asked for his papers. These he took to the town offices, where they were stamped as being in due order. Half an hour later, as Fergus was at his meal, two officers entered.

"Your papers appear to be right, sir," one of them said, courteously, "but in times like these it is our duty to examine closely into these matters. You come from Vienna?"

"Yes, sir."

"Which way did you travel?"

"By way of Linz and Budweis," he said. "The snow began on the day before I left the capital, and I was advised to take that route as the road would be more level, and less likely to be blocked with snow than that through Horn. You will see that my paper was stamped at Linz, and also at Freystadt.

I was detained at the latter place seven days, for the first three it snowed, and for the next four days the garrison was occupied, with the aid of troops from Budweis, in opening the defile."

The officer nodded. "I happen to know that your story is correct, sir, and that it accounts fully for your movements since leaving Vienna. Which way do you intend to cross the passes into Saxony?"

"I must be guided by what I hear of their state. I had hoped to have got back before the snow began to fall in earnest, but I should think that the road by the river will now be the best."

"I should think so," the officer said; "but even that will be bad enough. However, I will not detain you further."

They moved away to another table, and calling for a bottle of wine sat down. "No, we are mistaken. I don't think the fellow would have the barefaced impudence to come through Prague," one said.

The other laughed. "I should think that he would have impudence for anything, Major. And in truth I rather hope that they won't lay hands upon him—a fellow who devised and carried out such a scheme as he did deserves his liberty. Of course, his overpowering the warder was nothing, but that he should have had the impudence to go down into the major's quarters, appropriate his clothes, leave his own uniform behind him, and then, taking advantage of the arrival of another regiment, march calmly out through them all, pass the sentries, who took him for one of the newly arrived officers in charge of the waggons, was really splendid!"

"How it was that they did not overtake him the next morning I cannot make out. He had no sword with him and no horse, and the spectacle of a field-officer on foot, without even a sword, should have attracted the attention of the very

first person who met him. He had not been gone two hours when troops started in pursuit, for when the major, whose door he had locked, had it burst open and found that his uniform was gone, he suspected something was wrong, and had all the sergeants in charge of prisoners mustered. One was missing, the man who had charge of this young Scotchman. As he could not be found, the fellow's cell was broken open, and there was the warder bound and gagged. The bird had flown, and parties of horse were sent off by all the roads leading to Bohemia and Silesia, but no signs of the man have, as far as we have heard, yet been discovered. The only thing that I can imagine is that when he heard the cavalry in pursuit he left the road and hid up somewhere, and that afterwards he tried to make his way by unfrequented paths and was starved in the snow. In that case his body is not likely to be found until the spring."

"I cannot help thinking that a fellow who could plan and carry out that escape would hardly be likely to lose his life in a snow-drift. You see, it was not a sudden idea. On no other evening would he have found the gate open after sunset, nor would he have been certain to have found the major absent from his quarters. He must have been waiting patiently for his opportunity, and as soon as he heard that another battalion was coming into the garrison he must have resolved to act. More than that, he must have calculated that instead of arriving at four o'clock, as they were timed to do, they would be detained and not get in until after dark. They are clear-headed fellows these Scotchmen, whether they are in our army or Frederick's. What makes the affair more wonderful is that this was quite a young fellow, and probably understood no German ; but I think that he would have acted more wisely had he waited until the spring."

"I don't know," the other said. "When once the troops

are all in movement north, he certainly could not have escaped in a military uniform without being questioned; and it scarcely seems possible that he could have procured any other. He must be in more of a hurry to fight again than I am."

"There can hardly be much serious fighting," the other said. "With us, Russia, and France, and with the 50,000 Swedes who have been bought by France, we shall have 500,000 men under arms, while we know that 200,000 is the utmost Frederick can muster, and these will have to be scattered in every direction round his frontier."

"I am sorry that France has joined in," the other said. "It is unnatural enough that we and Russia should combine to crush Prussia, but when it comes to our old enemies the French helping us against a German power, I say frankly I don't like it. Besides, though we may get Silesia back again, that will be a small advantage in comparison to the disadvantage of France getting a firm foot-hold on this side of the Rhine. Even if her share of the partition doesn't extend beyond the river, this will be her frontier nearly down to the sea, and she will have the power of pouring her troops into Germany whenever she chooses."

Fergus had now finished his meal, and without caring to listen longer he betook himself to bed. To avoid all appearance of haste, he did not start so early the next morning, but mounted at ten and rode to the junction of the Eger with the Elbe. It was too late to cross the river that night, and he therefore put up at a village on the bank, and crossed in a ferry-boat on the following morning to Leitmeritz, a town of considerable size. He was now within a day's ride of the defile through which the Elbe finds its way from Bohemia into Saxony. His papers were inspected as usual by the officer in command of a troop of cavalry there.

"You will have a rough time of it if you push on," he said.

"There is no traffic through the passes now, so the snow will lie as it fell, and at any moment it may come down again. As far as the mouth of the pass you will find it easy enough, for we send half a troop as far as that every day, but beyond that, I should say it would be all but, if not quite, impassable. I advise you to stay here quietly until you hear of someone having crossed, or, at any rate, if you do go on, you must take three or four peasants as guides and to help you through difficult places."

"Would it not be possible, Captain," Fergus asked, "to hire a boat?"

"I did not think of that. Yes, there are flat boats that at ordinary times go down to Dresden, with the rafts of timber, but whether you would find anyone willing now to make such a journey is more than I can say."

"I am very anxious to be back to my business," Fergus said; "and as I should have to pay handsomely for guides to take me over, and even then might lose my life, it would be better for me to pay higher and get through at once."

On going down to the water-side he saw several boats hauled up, and it was not long before some boatmen, seeing a stranger examining their craft, came down to him.

"I want to go down to Dresden," he said.

"'Tis a bad time of the year," one of the men replied.

"It is a bad time of the year as far as cold is concerned, but it is a good time of the year for going down the river," he said, "for now that the frost has set in, the river is low and the current gentle, whereas in the spring when the snow is melting it must be a raging torrent in some of the narrow defiles."

This evidence that the stranger, whoever he was, was no fool, silenced the boatmen for a minute.

"Now," Fergus went on, "what is the lowest price that

one of you will take me and my horse down to Dresden for? I am disposed to pay a fair price and not more, and if you attempt to charge an exorbitant one I shall take guides and follow the road."

"You would never get through," one of the men said.

"Well, at any rate I would try, and if I could not succeed by the road by the river, I would cross by some other pass. I have no doubt whatever I could get through by Graber and Zittau."

The stranger's acquaintance with the country again silenced the men. They talked for a while apart, and then one said:

"We will take you for twenty rix-dollars."

"Do you suppose that I am the emperor in disguise?" Fergus said, indignantly. "'Tis but three days' journey at most, and perhaps six for coming back against the stream."

"We shall need four men, master, and there is the food by the way."

After much bargaining the price was settled at fifteen rix-dollars, both parties being satisfied with the bargain; the men because it was more than twice the sum for which they would have been glad to do it at ordinary times, Fergus because he had still forty rix-dollars in his pocket, and had only bargained as he did, in order not to appear too anxious on the subject. The price was to include the erection, at one end of the boat, of a snug cover of rushes for his use. He found on going down to the shore three hours later that the boatmen were engaged in covering in the whole of the craft, with the exception of a few feet at each end, with a roof of rushes. The boat itself was some thirty-five feet in length, and ten wide, with straight sides and a general resemblance to a canal barge, save that the beam was greater in comparison to the length. The roof was high and sloped sharply. A tall man could walk along in the centre, while at the sides there was

but three feet of height. Hay and straw were extremely scarce, the whole supply of the country having been stripped by the foraging parties, but bundles of reeds had been thickly littered down, especially near the stern. Shortly after his return the landlord of the inn told him that if he did not want to take the horse with him he would himself gladly buy it.

"I have frequently to send to Prague for things for the inn, and, besides, I have to get provisions for people in the town. I sold my best horse last autumn to an officer whose charger had been killed. Now that sledging has begun I want one which can travel fast and do the journey there in a day, so if you don't want to take it and will accept a reasonable price I will buy it."

The offer was a welcome one. With two splendid horses at his command—for he knew that good care would have been taken of the one left in camp—a third would only have been in the way, and this, although a good and useful beast, was scarce good-looking enough for an officer on the marshal's staff. Therefore, after the usual amount of bargaining, he parted with it for a fair price. The next morning early he went on board, the servant of the inn following with a great hamper of wine and provisions. He was glad to see that a bright fire burned on an earthen hearth in the middle of the boat, the smoke finding its way out partly through a hole cut in the thatch above it, partly by the opening at the fore end of the boat. He brought with him his horse-cloth, as well as his other belongings. The men, who were clearly in a hurry to be away, pushed the boat off from the shore as soon as he had taken his place.

"We want to be back as soon as we can," the owner of the boat said, "for it will not be long before the ice begins to form, and we don't want to be frozen in."

"It does not feel to me quite so cold this morning," Fergus remarked.

"No, sir; we are going to have more snow. That won't matter to us, and if it snows for the next week, all the better. It is not often that the river closes altogether until after Christmas. In the mountains the river seldom freezes at all, there is too much current; and, besides, in shelter of the hills the cold is not so great."

Two oars were got out for the purpose of steering rather than of hastening the progress of the boat, and once well out in the current she was allowed to drift quietly with the stream. Fergus spread his horse-cloth on the rushes by the fire, and found no need for his sheep-skin coat, the cloak loosely thrown over his shoulders and the collar turned up, to keep off the draughts that blew in under the bottom of the thatch, being sufficient to make him thoroughly comfortable. There was nothing to see outside, the shore being low and flat. He had brought a large supply of meat with him, and handed over a portion of this to the man who acted as cook of the crew, and told him to make broth for them all.

This was a welcome gift to the crew, who but seldom touched meat, and, with the addition of barley, coarse flour, and herbs that they had brought for their own use, an excellent stew was provided. The pot was kept going through the journey, fresh meat and other ingredients being added from time to time. In addition to this slices of meat were grilled over the fire and eaten with the bread they had brought. The gift of a bottle of wine between the crew each day, and of a small ration of spirits the last thing in the evening, added greatly to the satisfaction of the men. By nightfall they arrived at the entrance of the defile; the snow was falling heavily, and they tied up against the bank.

Fergus chatted with the men and listened to their stories of

the river for some hours. All of them had at various times gone on timber rafts. They bewailed the war, which would do them much harm. It would not altogether interrupt trade, for timber would be required as usual in Saxony and Hanover. As a rule neither of the contending armies interfered with the river traffic, though communications by land were greatly interrupted, owing to the peasants' carts being impressed for military service. This and the anxiety of everyone for the safety of his home and belongings brought the trade between the countries to a stand-still. On the river, however, the difficulty consisted, not in any interference by the authorities, but from so large a number of the able-bodied men being called out for service, that the amount of timber cut and brought down was greatly diminished, while the needs of the army brought the trade in cattle and other produce to an entire cessation.

The dangers of the river were not great, although in spring, when the snow melted and the river was swollen, navigation was rendered, especially in the narrow reaches of the defile, difficult and dangerous, for the force of the stream was so great that it was well-nigh impossible to direct the course of the rafts, and indeed the poles used for that purpose were often found too short to reach the bottom.

The men were up long before daylight, but it was two hours later before Fergus roused himself, and shaking off the fine snow that had drifted in and lay thickly on his coat, went out to have a look at things. One of the men was already preparing breakfast; two of the others stood at the bow with long poles, with which they punted the boat along. The captain, also provided with a pole, stood in the stern. The snow had ceased, but the air felt sharp and cold as it came down from the hills, which were all thickly covered.

"So there is an end of the snow for the present, Captain,"

he said, as he pushed aside the curtain of reeds that closed the stern of the covered portion and joined him.

"Yes; I am not altogether sorry, for we can see where we are going. We shall keep on now until we are through the defile."

"But there is no moon, Captain."

"No, but we can tell pretty well, by the depth of water, where we are, and can manage to keep in the middle of the current. There are no obstructions there to affect us, though in some places there are plenty of ugly rocks near the shore. However, if we have luck we shall be through before midnight, and shall pass all the worst points before sunset."

The day passed, indeed, without adventure of any kind. The journey was highly interesting to Fergus, for the scenery was very picturesque. Sometimes the hills narrowed in, and the stream, straitened in its course, hastened its speed; at others the hills receded and were covered far up with forests, above which bleak mountain-tops with their mantle of snow rose high in the air. The captain pointed out the spot where the Saxons had crossed, and where, pent in and surrounded with batteries commanding every means of exit, they were forced to surrender.

"It is smooth work now," he said, as they were going through one of the narrows, "for the river is low and the current gentle; but in floods there are waves here that would swamp the boat did she keep out in the middle as we are doing, and it would be impossible to pole her against it, even close to the shore. You see the ice is forming already near the banks."

"How do you manage coming back?"

"In some places we can pole the boat. She will be light, and will only draw a few inches of water. Then we hire a horse for a bit at one of these little villages; or, where the

road leaves the river, the other three will get out and tow from the edge while I shall steer. We shall manage it easily enough if the ice does not form too thickly. If the worst comes to the worst, we should stop at one of the villages, get the people to help us to haul her well up, wait till the snows are quite over, and then make our way back on foot, and come and fetch the boat up when the spring floods are over."

"Then the pass is not so dangerous after all, Captain," Fergus said, with a smile.

"Not when the snow has once hardened, and to men accustomed to it. As soon as the weather gets settled there will be a little traffic, and the snow will be beaten down. Besides, where the hills come steep to the water's edge, a man on foot can always make his way along when the water is low, though a horseman might not be able to do so."

"In fact, I suppose," Fergus said, "you all combine at Leitmeritz to represent the passes as being a great deal more dangerous than they are, in order to force those obliged to make the journey to take as many men as possible with him, or to pay two or three times the proper fare by boat."

"The passes over the hills would be terrible now," the man said. "Most of them would be absolutely impassable until the snow hardens. As for the rest," he added, with a smile, "it may be that there is something in what you say; but, you see, times are hard. There is little work to be done and scarce any timber coming down, and if we did not get a good job occasionally it would go very hard with us."

By nightfall they were nearly through the defile. Lanterns were placed in the bow of the boat, and until long after Fergus was asleep the men continued to work at their poles. When he woke up in the morning the boat was floating down a quiet river, with the plains of Saxony on either side and the mountain range far astern. At noon they neared Dresden, and an

hour later Fergus stepped ashore. He paid the men the sum arranged, and handed over to them the rest of his provisions, which would be sufficient to carry them far on their way back.

He soon learnt that Marshal Keith was established in his old quarters, and made his way thither. He met two or three officers of his acquaintance, but no one recognized him in his present attire. He had hired a boy when he landed to carry his cloak and valises; the saddle and bridle he had sold with the horse. He was, as usual, passing the sentries at the gate without notice, when one of them stepped in front of him.

"What is your business, sir?"

"My business is with Marshal Keith," he said, "and it is particular."

The sentry called a sergeant of the guard.

"You can pass me up," Fergus said, sharply. "I am well known to Marshal Keith, and he will assuredly see me."

A soldier took him up to the ante-room. Lieutenant Lindsay, who was on duty, came forward, looked at him doubtfully for a moment, and then shouted, joyfully: "Why, Drummond, is it you? This is indeed a joyful meeting, old fellow. I had thought of you as immured in one of the enemy's fortresses, and as likely to remain there till the war was over, and now here you are. The marshal will be delighted."

"He cannot be more pleased than I am to be back again, Lindsay. Is he alone?"

"Yes; come in at once; I won't announce you." He opened the door.

"A gentleman to see you, Marshal," he said, and Fergus walked in. The marshal recognized him at once, and holding out both hands shook those of Fergus cordially.

"I am indeed glad to see you," he said. "We knew that you were unhurt, for on the morning after the battle we sent in a *parlementaire* to Browne with the list of prisoners taken,

and received his list in return, and as your name was among them, and you were not put down as wounded, my anxiety about you was relieved. We tried a month later to get exchanges, but they would not hear of it. In the first place there is no doubt that the king's action in incorporating the Saxons with our army has caused a strong feeling against him, and in the second they had plenty of fortresses in which to stow their prisoners, while they would calculate that the more prisoners we had to look after, the fewer men they would have to fight. And now tell me by what miracle you have got here. I have nothing particular to do.

"Lindsay, you may as well stop and hear the story. Tell the sergeant to call you out if anyone in particular comes, to everyone else, I am engaged. Or stay," he broke off, "they have just told me that luncheon is ready in the next room; a story is always better told over a bottle of wine, so tell the sergeant, Lindsay, that for the next hour I can see no one unless it is on very particular business. Now, in the first place, Captain Drummond—Oh, of course you have not heard," he broke off in answer to Fergus's look of surprise. "The king and I watched you charge through that Austrian squadron, and when he saw you reach our cavalry in safety, and they turned to come back, he ordered me at once to make out your commission as captain. I ventured to object that you were very young. He said you had saved half his cavalry, and that he would promote you if you were an infant in arms."

"It is really absurd, Marshal. I shall feel downright ashamed to be called captain by men still lieutenants though a dozen years older than I am. I fear I have gone over Lindsay's head."

"You need not mind me, Drummond," Lindsay laughed; "I shall have a chance one of these days; but not a soul

will grudge you your promotion. There were many of us who saw your charge, and I can tell you that it was the talk of the whole army next day, and it was thoroughly recognized that it saved the cavalry, for their commander would certainly have taken them against the Austrians, and if he had, it is equally certain that none of them would have got back again ; and when your name appeared in orders the next day, we all felt that no one ever better deserved promotion."

"The king inquired especially, as soon as the list came, whether you were wounded, Fergus," Keith said, "and was very much pleased when he heard that you were not. Now, let us hear how you come to be here."

The marshal laughed heartily when Fergus told of his escape in the disguise of an Austrian field-officer.

"It was most admirably managed, Fergus," he said, when the tale was finished ; "and your making for Vienna instead of for the frontier was a masterly stroke. Of course your finding a friend there was most fortunate, but even had you not done so, I have no doubt you would have got through somehow. I think the best idea of all was your taking the post-horses, and then getting a fresh suit of clothes from the postmaster. I am glad you ordered the major's suit of clothes to be sent back to him. I should have liked to have seen his face when he found that not only his uniform, but his prisoner had disappeared. It will be a good story to tell the king. He has sore troubles enough on his shoulders, for the difficulties are thickening round ; and although Frederick is a born general, he really loves peace and quiet and books and the society of a few friends far better than the turmoil into which we are plunged.

"The French are going to open the campaign in the spring with an army of a hundred thousand men. Russia will invade the east frontier with certainly as many more,

perhaps a hundred and fifty thousand. They say these rascally Swedes, who have not a shadow of quarrel against us, intend to land fifty thousand men in Pomerania, and that Austria will put two hundred and fifty thousand in the field. Even-tempered and self-relying as the king is, all this is enough to drive him to despair, and anything that will interest him for an hour and make him forget his difficulties is very welcome."

The marshal asked many questions, for, as he said, the king would like to know all the ins and outs of the matter, and he knew that Fergus would much rather that the story should be told the king by another than that he should be called upon to do so.

"I hope the horse came back safely, Lindsay?" Fergus asked, as they left the marshal's apartments.

"Oh, yes; he went back with the convoy of wounded, and he is now safe in Keith's stable; the other is, of course, at the count's. I sent your things back at the same time, and when we returned here I packed everything up and sewed them in a sack; they are all in the store-room."

"What has become of Karl; did he get safely back?"

"Yes; but he had a nasty sabre wound he got in the charge, and he was in hospital for six weeks. The king gave him a handsome present on the day after he came in, and would have given him a commission if he would have taken it, but he declined altogether, saying that he was very comfortable as he was. His colonel would have made him a sergeant at once, but he refused that also. Just at present he is still looking after your horse, and helping generally in Keith's stable. His wound was on the head, and he is scarcely fit for duty with his regiment, so of course he will now fall into his place with you again."

Fergus went down to the stable, where he was received

with the greatest delight by Karl, whose pride in his master, which after his exploit at Count Eulenfurst's was great, and had been heightened by the feeling excited in the army at his having saved the cavalry from destruction.

"I thought that you would be back by the spring, Captain," he said. "Donald and I have talked it over many a time, and we were of one mind that if anyone could get away from an Austrian prison you would do it."

CHAPTER VIII

PRAGUE

THE next morning Fergus rode over to see Count Eulenfurst. He found him quite restored to health, and was received by him, the countess, and Thirza with great pleasure.

"My return in safety is in no small degree due to you, Count. Had it not been for the letter to Count Platurn with which the countess furnished me, I doubt whether I should have been able to get through, or, at any rate, if I had done so, it could only have been with many hardships and dangers, and certainly great delay."

"I have no doubt that the help you received from the count was of considerable assistance to you, and lessened your difficulties much, Captain Drummond, but I am sure you would have managed without it. Had you formed any plans as to what you would have done had you found him absent?"

"I had thought of several things, Count, but I had settled on nothing. I should have remained but a day in Vienna, and should have exchanged the suit I had got from the innkeeper for some other. My idea was that I had best join

"FERGUS WAS RECEIVED BY THE COUNT, THE COUNTESS AND THIRZA, WITH GREAT PLEASURE"

one of the convoys of provisions going up to Bohemia. I calculated that I should have no difficulty in obtaining a place as a driver, for of course the service is not popular, and any of the men would have been glad enough for me to take his place. I might thus have got forward as far as Prague. After that I must have taken my chance, and I think I could in the same sort of way have got as far as Leitmeritz; but there I might have been detained for a very long time, until there was an opportunity of crossing the defiles. It would have been difficult, indeed, for me to have earned my living there, and what was left of the money I had after paying for the landlord's suit would scarce have lasted, with the closest pinching, till spring."

"You would have managed it somehow, I am sure," Thirza said, confidently. "After getting out of that strong fortress it would be nothing to get out of Bohemia into Saxony."

"We have not congratulated you yet," the countess said, "upon your last promotion. Lieutenant Lindsay came over to tell us about it and how you had gained it. Of course we were greatly pleased, although grieved to hear that you had been made prisoner. We wondered whether, at the time you were captured, you had any of the letters I had written with you, and whether they would come in useful. It did not even occur to me that you would have called upon Count Platurn, my cousin. I thought that you might be detained at Prague, but Vienna is the last place where we should have pictured you. Had we known that you had been sent to Spielberg I think we should have given up all hope of seeing you again until you were exchanged, for I have heard that it is one of the strongest of the Austrian fortresses. I do hope, Captain Drummond, we shall see a great deal of you this winter. There will not be many gayeties, though no doubt there will be some state balls;

but there will be many little gatherings as usual among ourselves, and we shall count upon you to attend them always, unless you are detained on service. We learn that it is probable your king will pass the whole of the winter here."

"We will send your horse down to you to-day," the count said. "You will find him in good condition. He has been regularly exercised."

"Thank you very much, Count. I wrote to you before I started, but I have had no opportunity of thanking you personally for those splendid animals. Sorry as I was to lose the horse I rode at Lobositz, I congratulated myself that I was not riding one of yours."

"I should have had no difficulty in replacing him, Captain Drummond," the count said, with a smile. "The least we can do is to keep you in horse-flesh while the war lasts, which I hope will not be very long, for surely your king can never hope to make head against the forces that will assail him in the spring, but will be glad to make peace on any terms."

"No doubt he would be glad to, Count; but as his enemies propose to divide his dominions among them, it is not very clear what terms he could make. But though I grant that on paper the odds against him are enormous, I think that you will see there will be some hard fighting yet before Prussia is partitioned."

"Perhaps so," the count replied; "but surely the end must be the same. You know I have been a strong opponent of the course taken by the Court here. Saxony and Prussia as Protestant countries should be natural allies, and I consider it is infamous that the Court, or rather Bruhl, who is all-powerful, should have joined in a coalition against Frederick, who had given us no cause of complaint whatever. My sympathies, then, are wholly with him; but I can see no hope whatever of his successfully resisting this tremendous combination."

"Various things might happen, Count. The Empresses of Russia or Austria or the Pompadour might die, or the allies might quarrel between themselves. England may find some capable statesman who will once again get an army together, and joined perhaps by the Netherlands, give France so much to do that she will not be able to give much help to her allies."

"Yes, all these things might happen; but Frederick's first campaign has been to a great extent a failure. It is true that he has established Saxony as his base, but the Saxon troops will be of no advantage to him. He would have acted much more wisely had he, on their surrender, allowed them to disband and go to their homes. Many then might have enlisted voluntarily. The country would not have had a legitimate grievance, and the common religious tie would soon have turned the scale in favour of Prussia, who, as all see, has been driven to this invasion by our Court's intrigues with Austria. Had he done this he could have marched straight to Prague, have overrun all Bohemia, established his head-quarters there, and menaced Vienna itself in the spring."

"Looking at it coolly, that might have been the best way, Count; but a man who finds that three or four of his neighbours have entered into a plot to attack his house and seize all his goods may be pardoned if he does not at first go the very wisest way to work."

The count laughed. "I hope that the next campaign will turn out differently; but I own that I can scarce see a possibility of Prussia alone making head against the dangers that surround her."

The winter passed quietly. There were fêtes, state balls, and many private entertainments, for while all Europe was indignant, or pretended to be so, at the occupation of Saxony, the people of that country were by no means so angry on their own account. They were no more heavily taxed by Frederick

than they were by their own Court, and now that the published treaty between the Confederates had made it evident that the country, without its own consent, had been deeply engaged in a conspiracy hostile to Prussia, none could deny that Frederick was amply justified in the step he had taken. At these parties only Prussian officers who were personal friends of the host were invited, but Fergus, who had been introduced by Count Eulenfurst to all his acquaintances, was always asked, and was requested to bring with him a few of his personal friends. Lindsay, therefore, was generally his companion, and was, indeed, in a short time invited for his own sake, for the Scottish officers were regarded in a different light to the Prussians, and their pleasant manners and frank gayety made them general favourites.

Their duties as aides-de-camp were now light indeed, although both were two or three times sent with despatches to Berlin, and even to more distant parts of Prussia, where preparations for the coming campaign were being made on a great scale. The whole Prussian population were united. It was a war not for conquest but for existence, and all classes responded cheerfully to the royal demands. These were confined to orders for drafts of men, for no new tax of any kind was laid on the people, the expenses of the war being met entirely from the treasure that had since the termination of the Silesian war been steadily accumulating, a fixed sum being laid by every year to meet any emergency that might arise.

Towards spring both parties were ready to take the field. The allies had 430,000 men ready for service. Frederick had 150,000 well-trained soldiers, while 40,000 newly raised troops were posted in fortresses at points most open to invasion. The odds were indeed sufficient to appall even the steadfast heart of Frederick of Prussia, but no one would have judged from the calm and tranquil manner in which the king made

his arrangements to meet the storm that he had any doubt as to the issue. Man for man, the Prussian soldier of the time was the finest in the world. He was splendidly drilled, absolutely obedient to orders, and filled with implicit confidence in his king and his comrades. He had been taught to march with extraordinary rapidity, and at the same time to manœuvre with the regularity and perfection of a machine, and could be trusted in all emergencies to do everything that man was capable of.

The French army, 110,000 strong, was the first to move; another 30,000 men were preparing to march to join the army that had been got up by that mixed body, the German Federation.

The main force was to move through Hanover. To oppose them was a mixed army, maintained by British money, comprising Hanoverians, Brunswickers, and Hessians, some 50,000 strong, commanded by the Duke of Cumberland. With these were some 5,000 Prussians, who had, by Frederick's orders, evacuated the frontier fortresses and joined what was called the British army of observation. Frederick prepared for the present to deal with the Austrians, intending, if successful against them, to send off 25,000 men to strengthen Cumberland's army. The proposed Swedish invasion was altogether disregarded; but thirty thousand men, principally militia, were posted to check the Russian invasion. So quiet had been the preparations that none of their enemies dreamt that the Prussians would assume the offensive, but considered that they would confine their efforts to defending the defiles into Saxony and Silesia.

But this was not Frederick's idea. As spring approached he had been busy redistributing his troops from their winter cantonment and preparing three armies for the invasion of Bohemia. April had been a busy month for the staff, and

the aides-de-camp had passed their days, and even their nights, on horseback. At last all was in readiness for the delivery of the stroke, and on the 20th the king started from Lockwitch, facing the old Saxon camp at Pirna, the Duke of Bevern from Lousitz, and Marshal Schwerin from Schlesien, and without the slightest warning the three great columns poured down into Bohemia.

The movement took the Austrians absolutely by surprise. Not dreaming of such a step on Frederick's part, they had prepared near the frontier vast magazines for the supply of their advancing army. These had to be abandoned in the greatest haste, and a sufficient amount of food to supply the entire army for three months fell into the hands of the Prussians. Marshal Browne and General Konigseck, who commanded the Austrian armies in Bohemia, fell back to Prague with the greatest speed that they could make. The light irregular corps that Frederick had raised during the winter and placed under experienced and energetic officers, pervaded the whole country, capturing magazines, and towns, putting some to ransom, dispersing small bodies of the enemy, and spreading terror far and wide. Browne succeeded in reaching Prague before the king could come up to him. Bevern, however, overtook Konigseck, and greatly hastened his retreat, killing a thousand men and taking five hundred prisoners, after which Konigseck reached Prague without further molestation, the Duke of Bevern joining Schwerin's column.

The Austrians retired through Prague and encamped on high ground on the south side of the city, Prince Karl being now in command of the whole. Had this prince been possessed of military talents or listened to Marshal Browne's advice, instead of taking up a defensive position, he would have marched with his whole army against the king, whose force he would very greatly have outnumbered; but instead of

doing so he remained inactive. On the 2d of May, twelve days after moving from Saxony, Frederick arrived within sight of Prague. So closely had he followed the retreating Austrians that he occupied that evening a monastery at which Prince Karl and Marshal Browne had slept the night before.

Thirty thousand men, who were under the command of Marshal Keith, were left to watch Prague and its garrison, while Frederick on Tuesday searched for a spot where he could cross the river and effect a junction with Schwerin. He knew his position, and had arranged that three cannon-shots were to be the signal that the river had been crossed. A pontoon bridge was rapidly thrown over, the signal was given, and the Prussians poured across it; and before the whole were over Schwerin's light cavalry came up, and an arrangement was made that the two forces should meet at six o'clock next morning at a spot within two miles of the Austrian camp on the Lisca hills.

All this time the Austrians stood inactive, and permitted the Prussian columns to join hands without the slightest attempt to interfere with them. Had Browne been in command very different steps would have been taken, but Prince Karl was indolent, self-confident, and opinionated, and had set his army to work to strengthen its position in every possible manner. This was naturally extremely strong, its right flank being covered by swampy ground formed by a chain of ponds from which the water was let off in the winter, and the ground sown with oats. These were now a brilliant green, and to the eyes of Frederick and his generals, surveying them from the distance, had the aspect of ordinary meadows. The whole ground was commanded by redoubts and batteries on the hill, which rose precipitately seven or eight hundred feet behind the position. In the batteries were sixty heavy cannon, while there were in addition one hundred and fifty field-guns.

Well might Prince Karl think his position altogether unassailable, and believe that if the Prussians were mad enough to attack they would be destroyed. Frederick and Schwerin spent much time in surveying the position, and agreed that on two sides the Austrian position was absolutely impregnable, but that on the right flank attack was possible. Schwerin would fain have waited until the next morning, since his troops were fatigued by their long marches, and had been on foot since midnight. The Austrians, however, were expecting a reinforcement of thirty thousand men under Daun to join them hourly, and the king therefore decided on an attack, the terrible obstacles presented by the swamps being altogether unnoticed.

With incredible speed the Prussians moved away to their left, and by eleven o'clock were in readiness to attack the right flank of the Austrian position.

Browne, however, was in command here, and as soon as the intention of the Prussians was perceived, he swung back the right wing of the army at right angles to its original position, so that he presented a front to the Prussian attack, massing thickly at Sterbold, a village at the edge of the swamps. Rapidly the whole of the artillery and cavalry were formed up on this face, and quick as had been the advance of the Prussians, the Austrians were perfectly ready to meet them.

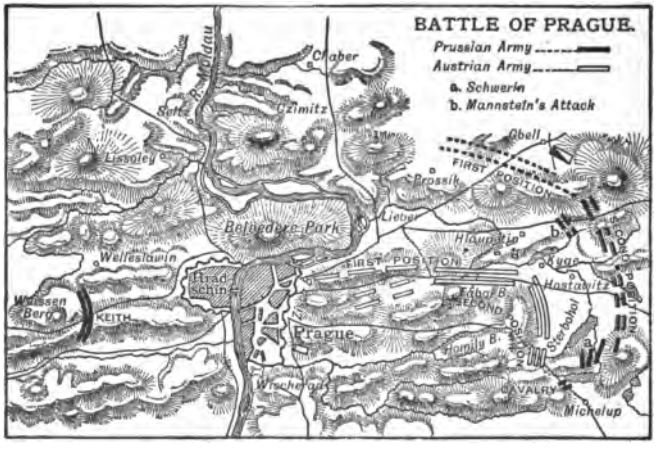
Led by General Winterfeld, the Prussians rushed forward, but as they advanced a terrific artillery fire was opened upon them. Winterfeld was wounded severely, and the troops fell back. The main body now advanced under Schwerin, and the whole again pressed forward. In spite of the incessant rain of grape and case shot, the Prussians advanced until they reached the pleasant green meadows they had seen in the distance. Then the real nature of the ground was at once disclosed.

The troops sunk to the knee, and in many cases to the waist, in the treacherous mud. Soldiers less valiant and less disciplined would have shrunk appalled at the obstacle, but the Prussians struggled on, dragging themselves forward with the greatest difficulty through mud, through slush, through a rain of grape from upwards of two hundred cannon, and through a storm of musketry fire from the infantry. Regiment after regiment, as it reached the edge of the dismal swamp, plunged in unhesitatingly, crawling and struggling onward. Never in the annals of warfare was there a more terrible fight. For three hours it continued without a moment's interval. Thousands of the assailants had fallen, and their bodies had been trodden deep into the swamp, as their comrades pressed after them. Sometimes a regiment struggled back out of the mire, thinking it beyond mortal power to win victory under such terms, but the next moment they re-formed and flung themselves into the fight again.

Schwerin, seeing the regiment named after him recoil, placed himself at their head, and shouting, "Follow me, my sons!" led them till he fell dead, struck by five grape-shot. The Austrians fought as stoutly, Marshal Browne leading them, till a cannon-ball took off his foot, and he was carried into Prague to die there six weeks later. While this terrible struggle was going on, the Prussian cavalry had made a very wide circuit round the ponds and lakelets, and charged the Austrian horse on Browne's extreme right. The first lines were broken by it, but so many and strong were they that the Prussians were brought to a stand-still; then they drew back and charged a second and a third time. The Austrians gave way; Prince Karl himself, brave if incapable, did his best to rally them, but in vain; and at last they fled in headlong rout, pursued for many miles by Ziethen's horsemen.

Still the infantry struggle was maintained. At last the

Prussian right wing, hitherto not engaged, though suffering from the artillery fire on the heights, had their turn. General Mannstein discovered that at the angle where Browne threw back the right wing of the army, to face the Prussians, there was a gap. The troops there had gradually pressed more to their right to take part in the tremendous conflict, and the elbow was therefore defended only by a half-moon battery. Through the fish tanks he led the way, followed by Princes Henry and Ferdinand. The whole division struggled through the mud, drove back the Austrians hastily brought up to op-



pose them, captured the battery, and poured into the gap, thereby cutting the Austrian army in two, and taking both halves in flank.

This was the deciding point of the battle. The Austrian right, already holding its own with difficulty, was crumpled up and forced to fall back hastily; the other half of the army, isolated by the irruption, threw itself back, and endeavoured to make a fresh stand at spots defended by batteries and stock-

ades. But all was in vain; the Prussians pressed forward exultingly, the fresh troops leading the way. In spite of the confusion occasioned by the loss of their commanders, and of the surprise caused by the sudden break-up of their line by the inrush of Mannstein and the princes, the Austrians fought stoutly. Four times they made a stand, but the Prussians were not to be denied; the Austrian guns that had been captured were turned against them, and, at last giving way, they fled for Prague, where some 40,000 of them rushed for shelter, while 15,000 fled up the valley of the Moldau.

Had it not been that an accident upset Frederick's calculations, the greater portion of the Austrians would have been obliged to lay down their arms. Prince Maurice of Dessau had been ordered to move with the right wing of Keith's army, 15,000 strong, to take up a position in the Austrian rear. This position he should have reached hours before, but in his passage down a narrow lane some of the pontoons for bridging the river were injured. When the bridge was put together it proved too short to reach the opposite bank. The cavalry in vain endeavoured to swim the river, the stream was too strong, and Frederick's masterly combination broke down, and the bulk of the Austrians, instead of being forced to surrender, were simply shut up in Prague with its garrison.

The battle of Prague was one of the fiercest ever fought. The Austrian army had improved wonderfully since the Silesian war; their artillery were specially good, their infantry had adopted many of the Prussian improvements, and had Browne been in sole command and had he escaped unwounded, the issue of the day might have been changed. The Prussians lost 12,500 men, killed and wounded; the Austrians, including prisoners, 13,300. Frederick himself put the losses higher, estimating that of the Austrians at 24,000, of whom 5,000 were prisoners, that of the Prussians at 18,000, "without

counting Marshal Schwerin, who alone was worth about 10,000." It is evident that the king's estimate of the loss of the Austrians must have been excessive. They had the advantage of standing on the defensive. The Prussian guns did but comparatively little service, while their own strong batteries played with tremendous effect upon the Prussians, struggling waist-deep in the mud. There can therefore be little doubt that the latter must have suffered in killed and wounded a much heavier loss than the Austrians.

Impassive as he was, and accustomed to show his feelings but little, Frederick was deeply affected at the loss of his trusted general and of the splendid soldiers who had been so long and carefully trained; and even had Prague fallen, the victory would have been a disastrous one for him, for, threatened as he was by overwhelming forces, the loss of 5,000 men to him was quite as serious as that of 20,000 men to the Confederates.

In Keith's army there had been considerable disappointment when it became known that they were to remain impassive spectators of the struggle, and that while their comrades were fighting they had simply to blockade the northern side of the city.

"You will have plenty of opportunities," the marshal said, quietly, to his aides-de-camp on seeing their downcast look. "This war is but beginning; it will be our turn next time. For it is a great task the king has set himself in attempting to carry the strong position that the Austrians have taken up, and he will not do it without very heavy loss. To-morrow you may have reason to congratulate yourselves that we have had no share in the business."

Nevertheless, as the day went on, and the tremendous roar of battle rolled down upon them, terrible, continuous, and never ceasing for three hours, even Keith walked in a state

of feverish anxiety backwards and forwards in front of his tent, while the troops stood in groups talking in low tones and trying to pierce with their eyes the dun-coloured cloud of smoke that hung over the combatants on the other side of Prague. When at last the din of battle went rolling down towards that city, the feeling of joy was intense. In many the relief from the tension and the long excitement was so great that they burst into tears, some shook hands with each other, others threw their caps into the air, and then a few voices burst into the well-known verse of the Church hymn:

"Nun danket alle Gott,
Mit herzen mund und händen,"

of which our English translation runs:

"Now thank we all our God,
With hands and hearts and voices."

And in a moment it was taken up by 30,000 deep voices in a solemn chorus, the regimental bands at once joining in the jubilant thanksgiving. Pious men were these honest, Protestant, hard-fighting soldiers, and very frequently on their long marches they beguiled the way by the stirring hymns of the Church. Keith and those around him stood bareheaded as the hymn was sung, and not a word was spoken for some time after the strains had subsided.

"That is good to listen to," Keith said, breaking the silence. "We have often heard the psalm-singing of Cromwell's Ironsides spoken of with something like contempt, but we can understand now how men who sing like that with all their hearts should be almost invincible."

"It is the grandest thing that I have ever heard, Marshal," Fergus said. "Of course I have heard them when they were marching, but it did not sound like this."

"No, Fergus; it was the appropriateness of the occasion,

and perhaps the depth of the feelings of the men, and our own sense of immense relief, that made it so striking. Listen! there is a fresh outburst of firing. The Austrians have fallen back, but they are fighting stoutly."

The chief effect of this great battle was of a moral rather than material kind. Prague was not a strong place, but with a garrison of 50,000 men it was too well defended to assault, and until it was taken Frederick could not march on as he had intended and leave so great a force in the rear. The moral effect was, however, enormous. The allies had deemed that they had a ridiculously easy task before them, and that Frederick would have to retreat before their advancing armies, and must at last see that there was nothing but surrender before him.

That he should have emerged from behind the shelter of the Saxon hills, and have shattered the most formidable army of those that threatened him on ground of their own choosing, intrenched and fortified, caused a feeling of consternation and dismay. The French army, the Russians, and the united force of the French with the German Confederacy were all arrested on their march, and a month elapsed before they were again set in motion. Marshal Daun, who had arrived at Erdwise, fell back at once when the news reached him, and taking post at the entrance of the defile he made the greatest efforts to increase his army. Reinforcements were sent to him from Vienna and all the adjacent country. The Duke of Bevern was posted with 20,000 men to watch him, and Frederick sat down with all his force to capture Prague.

The siege train was hurried up from Dresden, and on the 9th of May his batteries on the south side of the city, and those of Keith on the north, opened fire on the city. For a month missiles were poured into the town. Magazines were blown up and terrible destruction done, but the garrison held

out firmly. At times they made sorties, but these were always driven in again with much loss. But 50,000 men behind fortifications, however weak, were not to be attacked. Every approach to the city was closely guarded, but it became at last evident that as long as the provisions held out Prague was not to be taken. The cannonade became less incessant, and after a month almost died away, for Daun had by this time gathered a large army, and it was evident that another great battle would have to be fought. If this was won by the Prussians Prague would be forced to surrender; if not, the city was saved.

It was not until the 12th of June that Daun, a cautious and careful general, in accordance with urgent orders from Vienna, prepared to advance. His force had now grown to 60,000; 40,000 of the garrison of Prague could be spared to issue out to help him. Frederick had under 70,000, and of these a great portion must remain to guard their siege works. Thus, then, all the advantages lay with the relieving army. Several officers in disguise were despatched by Daun, to carry into Prague the news of his advance, and to warn Prince Karl to sally out with the whole of his force, and fall upon the Prussians as soon as he attacked them in the rear. So vigilant, however, were the besiegers that none of these messengers succeeded in entering Prague.

On the 13th Frederick set out with 10,000 men, to be followed by 4,000 more under Prince Maurice two days later, these being all that could be spared from the siege works, to join Bevern, who had fallen back as Daun advanced. The junction effected, Frederick joined Bevern, and approached Daun, who was posted in a strong position near Kolin, thirty-five miles from Prague. On the 17th Prince Maurice arrived, and after several changes of position, the armies faced each other on the 18th within a short distance of Kolin. Daun's

new position was also a strong one, and was in fact only to be assailed on its right, and the Prussian army was moved in that direction, their order being to pay no attention to the Austrian batteries or musketry fire, but to march steadily to the spot indicated. This was done. Ziethen dashed with his hussars upon the Austrian cavalry, drawn up to bar the way, defeated them and drove them far from the field, while Hulsen's division of infantry carried the village of Preezer on the Austrian flank, in spite of the Austrian batteries.

So far Frederick's combination had worked admirably. Hulsen then attacked a wood behind it, strongly held by the Austrians. Here a struggle commenced which lasted the whole day, the wood being several times taken and lost. He was not supported owing to a mistake that entirely upset Frederick's plan of battle. While three miles away from the point where the attack was to be delivered, Mannstein, whose quickness of inspiration had largely contributed to the victory of Prague, now ruined Frederick's plan by his impetuosity. The corn-fields through which his division was marching towards the assault of the Austrian left were full of Croats, who kept up so galling a fire that, losing all patience, he turned and attacked them. The regiment to which he gave the order cleared the Croats off, but these returned strongly reinforced.

The regiments coming behind, supposing that fresh orders had arrived, also turned off, and in a short time the whole division, whose support was so sorely needed by Hulsen, were assaulting the almost impregnable Austrian position in front. Another mistake, this time arising from a misconception of a too brief and positive order given by Frederick himself, led Prince Maurice, who commanded the Prussian centre, to hurl himself in like manner against the Austrians. For four hours the battle raged. In spite of their disadvantages the Prussians fought so desperately that Daun believed the day to be lost,

and sent orders to the troops to retreat to Suchdol; but the commander of the Saxon cavalry considered the order premature, and gathering a large body of Austrian infantry, charged with them and his own cavalry so furiously upon Hulsen that the latter was forced to retreat.

The movement spread, the attack slackened, and the other division moved down the hill they had all but won. Frederick in vain tried to rally and lead them afresh to the attack. They had done all that men could do, and the battle ceased. Daun scarcely attempted to pursue; and the Prussians marched away, unmolested even by cavalry, some of the regiments remaining firm in their position until nightfall, repulsing with great loss the one attempt of the Austrians at pursuit, and Ziethen's cavalry did not draw off until ten at night. The Austrians had 60,000 men in the field, of whom they lost in killed and wounded 8,114; the Prussians, who began the day 34,000 strong, lost 13,773, of whom the prisoners, including all the wounded, amounted to 5,380.

The news of the disaster, and with it Frederick's order to prepare to raise the siege of Prague at once, came like a thunder-clap upon the Prussian camp. Frederick himself and the remnant of his army arrived there in good order with all their baggage-train a day later. The cannon were removed from the batteries, the magazines emptied, and in good order, and without any attempt on the part of the Austrian garrison to molest them, the Prussian army marched away and took up their post at Leitmeritz. The news that an Austrian army had at last beaten Frederick, and that Prague was saved, caused an exultation and joy among the allies equal to the dismay that had been aroused by the defeat at Prague, although there was nothing remarkable or worth much congratulation in the fact that an army, in an almost impregnable position, had repulsed the attack of another of little over half its strength.

CHAPTER IX

IN DISGUISE

LEITMERITZ, lying as it did but a short distance beyond the mouth of the defiles leading into Saxony, was an admirably chosen position; supplies for the army could be brought up by the Elbe, and a retreat was assured should an overwhelming force advance to the attack, while from this spot Frederick could march at once either to the defence of Silesia or to check an enemy approaching from the west towards the defiles through the mountains.

The news of the defeat at Kolin set all the enemies of Prussia in movement. The Russian army entered East Prussia, where there was no adequate force to oppose it, the Swedes issued from Stralsund, the French pressed hard upon the so-called British column of observation, and forced the Duke of Cumberland to retreat before them. Another French army, in conjunction with that of the German Confederacy, threatened the western passes into Saxony.

As yet it was impossible to say where Marshal Daun and Prince Karl would deliver their blow, and great efforts were made to fill up the terrible gaps created at Prague and Kolin in the regiments most hotly engaged, with fresh troops, who were speedily rendered by incessant drills and discipline fit to take their places in the ranks with the veterans. The king was lodged in the cathedral close of the city. Keith with his division occupied the other side of the river, across which a bridge was at once thrown. Prince Maurice and Bevern had gone to Bunzlau at the junction of the Iser and Elbe, but when, upon a crowd of light Austrian horse approaching, the prince sent to the king to ask whether he should retreat, he

was at once recalled and the Prince of Prussia appointed in his stead.

On the 2d of July came news which, on the top of his other troubles, almost prostrated Frederick. This was of the death of his mother, to whom he was most fondly attached; he retired from public view for some days; for although he was as iron in the hour of battle, he was a man of very sensitive disposition, and fondly attached to his family. His chief confidant during this sad time was the English ambassador, Mitchell, a bluff, shrewd, hearty man, for whom the king had conceived a close friendship. He had accompanied Frederick from the time he left Berlin, and had even been near him on the battle-fields, and it was in no small degree due to his despatches and correspondence that we have obtained so close a view of Frederick the man, as distinct from Frederick the king and general.

The Prince of Prussia, however, did no better than Prince Maurice. The main Austrian army, after much hesitation, at last crossed the Elbe and moved against him, thinking, doubtless, that he was a less formidable antagonist than the king. The prince fell back, but in such hesitating and blundering fashion that he allowed the Austrians to get between him and his base, the town of Zittau, where his magazines had been established. Zittau stood at the foot of the mountain, and was a Saxon town. The Austrians had come to deliver Saxony, and they began the work by firing red-hot balls into Zittau, thereby laying the whole town in ashes, rendering 10,000 people homeless, and doing no injury whatever to the Prussian garrison or magazines.

The heat, however, from the ruins was so terrible that the five battalions in garrison there were unable to support it, and, evacuating the town, joined the prince's army, which immediately retired to Bautzen on the other side of the mountains,

leaving the defiles to Saxony and Silesia both unguarded. As messenger after messenger arrived at Leitmeritz with reports of the movements of the troops, the astonishment and indignation of Frederick rose higher and higher. The whole fruits of the campaign were lost by this astounding succession of blunders, and on hearing that Zittau had been destroyed, and that the army had arrived at Bautzen in the condition of a beaten and disheartened force, he at once started with the bulk of the army by the Elbe passes for that town, leaving Maurice of Dessau with 10,000 men to secure the passes, and Keith to follow more slowly with the baggage-train and magazines.

On his arrival at Bautzen Frederick refused to speak to his brother, but sent him a message saying that he deserved to be brought before a court-martial which would sentence him and all his generals to death, but that he should not carry the matter so far, being unable to forget that the chief offender was his brother. The prince resigned his command, and the king in answer to his letter to that effect said that, in the situation created by him, nothing was left but to try the last extremity.

"I must go and give battle," he wrote, "and if we cannot conquer we must all of us get ourselves killed."

Frederick, indeed, as his letters show, had fully made up his mind that he would die in battle rather than live beaten. The animosity of his enemies was to a large extent personal to himself, and he believed that they would after his death be inclined to give better terms to Prussia than they would ever grant while he lived. For three weeks the king vainly tried to get the Austrians to give battle, but Prince Karl and Daun remained on the hill from which they had bombarded Zittau, and which they had now strongly fortified.

Their barbarous and most useless bombardment of Zittau had done their cause harm, for it roused a fierce cry of indig-

nation throughout Europe, even among their allies, excited public feeling in England to the highest point in favour of Frederick, and created a strong feeling of hostility to the Austrians throughout Saxony. As soon as Keith and the waggon-train arrived, bringing up the Prussian strength to 56,000, the king started on the 15th August (1757) for Bernstadt, and then to the stupefaction of the Austrians—who had believed that they had either Saxony or Silesia at their mercy whenever they could make up their mind which ought first to be gobbled up—so rapidly did the Prussian cavalry push forward that Generals Beck and Nadasti were both so taken by surprise that they had to ride for their lives, leaving baggage-coaches, horses, and all their belongings behind them.

On the 16th Frederick with the army marched and offered battle to the Austrians, but although so superior in numbers they refused to be beguiled from their fortified hill. At last, after tempting them in vain, Frederick was forced to abandon the attempt and return to Saxony bitterly disappointed. He had wanted above all things to finish with the Austrians, so as to be able to move off to the other points threatened.

He now arranged that Bevern and Winterfeld should take the command in his absence, watch the Austrians, and guard Silesia, while he, with 23,000 men, marched on the 31st of August from Dresden with the intention of attacking the combined French and German Confederacy force under Soubise that had already reached Erfurt. Keith accompanied the king on his harassing march.

Since the arrival of the army at Leitmeritz, Fergus had been incessantly engaged in carrying despatches between that town and Dresden, and worked even harder while the king was trying, but in vain, to bring about an engagement with the Austrians. For the first few days after starting for Erfurt

he had a comparatively quiet time of it. The marshal was now constantly the king's companion, his cheerful and buoyant temper being invaluable to Frederick in this time of terrible anxiety. Fergus would have found it dull work had it not been for the companionship of Lindsay, who was always light-hearted and ready to make the best of everything.

"I would rather be an aide-de-camp than a general at present, Drummond," he said one day. "Thank goodness we get our orders and have to carry them out, and leave all the thinking to be done by others. Never was there such a mess as this. Here we are in October, and we are very much as we were when we began in March."

"Yes, except that all our enemies are drawing closer to us."

"They are closer, certainly, but none of them would seem to know what he wants to do, and as for fighting, it is of all things that which they most avoid. We have been trying for the last two months for a fight with the Austrians, and cannot get one; now we are off to Erfurt, and I will wager a month's pay that the French will retire as soon as we approach, and we shall have all this long tramp for nothing and will have to hurry back again as fast as we came."

"It is unfortunate that we had to come, Lindsay. Things always seem to go badly when the king himself is not present, the princes make blunder after blunder, and I have no faith in Bevern."

"No," Lindsay agreed, "but he has Winterfeld with him."

"Yes, he is a splendid fellow," Drummond said; "but everyone knows that he and Bevern do not get on well together, and that the duke would very much rather that Winterfeld was not with him; and with two men like that, the one slow and cautious, the other quick and daring, there

are sure to be disagreements. We are going to attack a force more than twice our own strength, but I am much more certain as to what will be the result, than I am that we shall find matters unchanged when we get back here."

The foreboding was very quickly confirmed. A day or two later came the news that the Austrians had suddenly attacked an advanced position called the Jakelsberg, where Winterfeld, who commanded the van of Bevern's army, had posted two thousand grenadiers. Prince Karl undertook the operation by no means willingly, but the indignation at Vienna at his long delays had resulted in imperative orders being sent to him to fight. Nadasti was to lead the attack with fifteen thousand men, while the main army remained a short distance behind, ready to move up should a general battle be brought on. The march was made at night, and at daybreak a thousand Croats and forty companies of regular infantry rushed up the hill. Although taken by surprise, the Prussians promptly formed and drove them down again. Winterfeld was some miles behind, having been escorting an important convoy, and rode at a gallop to the spot as soon as he heard the sound of cannon, and brought up two regiments at a run just as the grenadiers were retiring from the hill, unable to withstand the masses hurled against them.

Sending urgent messages to Bevern to hurry up reinforcements, Winterfeld led his two regiments forward, joined the grenadiers, and, rushing eagerly up the hill, regained the position. But the Austrians were not to be denied, and the fight was obstinately sustained on both sides. No reinforcements reached Winterfeld, and after an hour's desperate fighting he was struck in the breast by a musket-ball and fell mortally wounded. The Prussians drew off slowly and in good order at two o'clock in the afternoon, and soon afterwards the Austrians also retired, nothing have come of this

useless battle save heavy loss to both sides, and the killing of one of Frederick's best and most trusted generals. It was not, however, without result, for Bevern, freed from the restraint of his energetic colleague, at once fell back to Schlesien, where he was more comfortable near his magazines.

Keith sent for Fergus on the evening when this bad news had arrived. "I want you, lad, to undertake a dangerous service. Now that Winterfeld has been killed the king is more anxious than ever as to the situation. It is enough to madden anyone. It is imperative that he should get to Erfurt and fight the French. On the other hand, everything may go wrong with Bevern while he is away, to say nothing of other troubles. Cumberland is retreating to the sea. The Russians are ever gaining ground in East Prussia. There is nothing now to prevent the remaining French army from marching on Berlin; and the Swedes have issued from Stralsund. It may be that by this time Soubise has moved from Erfurt, and this is what, above all things, we want to know. You showed so much shrewdness in your last adventure that I believe you might get through this safely. Doubtless there are cavalry parties far in advance of Erfurt, and these would have to be passed. The point is, will you undertake this mission to go to Erfurt to ascertain the force there, and, if possible, their intentions, and bring us back word?"

"I shall be glad to try, Marshal. There should be no difficulty about it. I shall, of course, go in disguise. I should not be likely to fall in with any of the enemy's cavalry patrols till within a short distance of Erfurt; but should I do so there would be little chance of their catching me, mounted as I am. I could leave my horse within a short distance of the town. Two or three hours would be sufficient to gather news of the strength of the force there, and the movements of any bodies of detached troops."

"Yes, you should have no great difficulty about that. A large proportion of the population are favourable to us, and being so near the frontier of Hanover, your accent and theirs must be so close that no one would suspect you of being aught but a townsman. Of course the great thing is speed. We shall march from eighteen to twenty miles a day. You will be able to go fifty. That is to say, if you start at once you can be there in the morning, and on the following morning you can bring us back news."

An hour later Fergus, dressed as a small farmer, started. It was a main line of road, and therefore he was able to travel as fast at night as he would do in the day. There was the advantage, too, that the disparity between his attire and the appearance of the horse he rode would pass unnoticed in the darkness. He had with him a map of the road on a large scale, and beneath his cloak he carried a small lantern, so as to be able to make detours to avoid towns where detachments of the enemy's cavalry might be lying. He had started two hours after the troops halted, and had four hours of daylight still before him, which he made the most of, and by sunset he was within fifteen miles of Erfurt.

So far he had not left the main road, but he now learned from some peasants that there was a small party of French hussars at a place three miles ahead. He therefore struck off by a by-road, and travelling slowly along turned off, two hours later, to a farmhouse, the lights from which had made him aware of its proximity. He dismounted a hundred yards from it, fastened his horse loosely to a fence, and then went forward on foot and peeped in cautiously at the window. It was well that he had taken the precaution, for the kitchen into which he looked contained a dozen French hussars. He retired at once, led his horse until he reached the road again, and then mounted.

Presently he met a man driving a cart. "My friend," he said, "do you know of any place where a quiet man could put up without running the risk of finding himself in the midst of these French and Confederacy troops?"

"'Tis not easy," the man replied, "for they are all over the country, pillaging and plundering. We are heartily sick of them, and there are not a few of us who would be glad if the King of Prussia would come and turn them out neck and crop."

"I don't care what sort of a place it is, so that I could put my horse up. It is a good one, and like enough some of these fellows would take a fancy to it."

"I don't think that it would be safe in any farmhouse within ten miles of here; but if you like to come with me, my hut stands at the edge of a wood, and you could leave him there without much risk."

"Thank you very much; that would suit me well. It is just what I had intended to do, but in the darkness I have no great chance of finding a wood. How far are we from Erfurt now?"

"About five miles."

"That will do very well. I have some business to do there, and can go and come back by the afternoon."

In a quarter of an hour they arrived at the man's house. It was but a small place.

"Not much to rob here," his host said, grimly. "They have taken my two cows and all my poultry. My horse only escaped because they did not think him fit for anything. This is a stranger, wife," he went on as a woman rose in some alarm from a stool upon which she was crouching by the fire. "He will stop here for the night, and, though there is little enough to offer him, at least we can make him welcome."

He took a torch from the corner of the room, lighted it at the fire, and went out. "You are right about your horse, my friend," he said, "and it is small chance you would have of taking him back with you if any of these fellows set eyes on him. I see your saddlery hardly matches with your horse."

Fergus had, indeed, before starting, taken off his saddle and other military equipments, and had replaced them with a common country saddle and bridle, adding a pair of rough wallets and the commonest of horse-cloths, so as to disguise the animal as much as possible.

"I am sorry that I cannot give you a feed for the animal," the man went on, "but I have none, and my horse has to make shift with what he can pick up."

"I have one of my wallets full. I baited the horse at inns as I came along. He may as well have a feed before I take him out into the wood."

He poured a good feed on to a flat stone. As he did so the peasant's horse lifted up his head and snuffed the air.

"You shall have some too, old boy," Fergus said, and going across was about to empty some on to the ground before it, when its owner, taking off his hat, held it out.

"Put it into this," he said. "It is seldom indeed that he gets such a treat, and I would not that he should lose a grain."

Fergus poured a bountiful feed into the hat. "Now," he said, "I can supplement your supper as well as your horse's," and from the other wallet he produced a cold leg of pork that Karl had put in before he started, together with three loaves, and two bottles of wine carefully done up in straw. The peasant looked astonished as Fergus took these out and placed them upon the table.

"No, no, sir," he said, "we cannot take your food in that way."

"You are heartily welcome to it," Fergus said. "If you do not assist me to eat it, it will be wasted. To-morrow I shall breakfast at Erfurt, and maybe dine also. I will start as soon as I get back."

"Well, well, sir, it shall be as you please," the man said; "but it seems that we are reversing our parts, and that you have become the host and we your guests."

It was a pleasant meal by the torch-light. Many a month had passed since the peasants had tasted meat, and the bread, fresh from the Prussian bakeries, was of a very different quality to the black oaten bread to which they were accustomed. A horn of good wine completed their enjoyment. When the meal was done the man said:

"Now, master, I will guide you to the wood."

There was no occasion to lead the horse, for it as well as its companion had been trained to follow their master like dogs, and to come to a whistle. The wood was but two or three hundred yards off, and the peasant led the way through the trees to a small open space in its centre. The saddle and bridle had been removed before they left the cottage, and Fergus tethered the horse by a foot-rope to a sapling growing on the edge of a clearing. Then he patted it on the neck, and left it beginning to crop the short grass.

"It won't get much," the peasant said, "for my animal keeps it pretty short; it is his best feeding-place now, and I generally turn it out here at night when the day's work is done."

"What is its work principally?"

"There is only one sort now," the man said. "I cut faggots in the forest and take a cart-load into Erfurt twice a week. I hope by the spring that all these troubles will be over, and then I cultivate two or three acres of ground; but so long as these French, and the Confederacy troops, who are

as bad, are about, it is no use to think of growing anything. Now, sir, is there anything that I can do for you?" he went on, after they returned to the cottage and had both lit their pipes and seated themselves by the fire. "I can see that you are not what you look. A farmer does not ride about the country on a horse fit for a king, or put up at a cottage like this."

"Yes; you can help me by leading me by quiet paths to Erfurt. I tell you frankly that my business there is to find out how strong the French and Confederacy army is, in and around the town; also whether they are taking any precautions against an attack, and if there are any signs that they intend to enter Hanover, or to move towards Dresden."

"I daresay I can learn all that for you without difficulty, for I supply several of the inns with faggots. There are troops quartered in all of them, and the helpers and servants are sure to hear what is going on. Not, of course, in the inns where the French are quartered, but where the German men are lodged. They speak plainly enough there, and indeed everyone knows that a great many of them are there against their will. The Hesse and Gotha and Dessau men would all prefer fighting on the Prussian side, but when they were called out they had to obey. At what time will you start?"

"I should like to get to Erfurt as soon as the place is astir."

"That is by five," the man said. "There is trumpeting and drumming enough by that time, and no one could sleep longer if they wanted to."

"Then we will start at dawn."

The peasant would have given up his bed to Fergus, but the latter would not hear of it, and said that he was quite accustomed to sleeping on the ground, whereupon the peasant went out and returned with a large armful of rushes which, as he told Fergus, he had cut only the day before to mend a hole

in the thatch. Fergus was well content, for he knew well enough that he should sleep very much better on fresh rushes than he should in the peasant's bed-place, where he would probably be assailed by an army of fleas.

As soon as the man and his wife were astir in the morning, Fergus got up, bathed his head and face in a tiny streamlet that ran within a few yards of the house, then, after cutting a hunch of bread to eat on their way, the two started.

They did not come down upon the main road until within a mile and a half of the town, and they then passed through a large village where a troop of French cavalry were engaged in grooming their horses. They attracted no attention whatever, and entered Erfurt at a quarter-past five. They separated when they got into the town, agreeing to meet in front of the cathedral at eleven o'clock. Fergus went to an eating-house where he saw a party of French non-commissioned officers and soldiers seated. They were talking freely, confident that neither the landlord, the man who was serving them, nor the two or three Germans present could understand them. It was evident that they had very little confidence in Soubise.

"One would think," a sergeant said, "that we were going to change our nationality and to settle down here for life. Here we have some fifty thousand men, and there is nothing to stop our going to Dresden, except some ten thousand or twelve thousand Prussians. They say that Daun has an army that could eat up Frederick, and it is certain that he could not spare a sergeant's guard to help bar the way. I cannot understand it, comrades. This leisurely way of making war may suit some people, but it is not our way."

"And we must admit that it is not the Prussians' way," another said. "They are our enemies, though why, I am sure I don't know; that is not our business. But the way that they dash out, and set the Austrians dancing, is really

splendid. I wish that our own generals had a little of Fritz's energy and go."

There was a general murmur of assent. "Here we are, September beginning, and next to nothing done. Now, there would be enough to do if Fritz could get away from Daun and dash off in this direction."

"Yes," another said, "there would be plenty to do, but I would not mind wagering that we should not wait for him; and after all I am not sure if it would not be the best thing to do, for these Germans with us are little better than a rabble."

"That is so, François; but, mixed up with us as they would be, they would have to fight whether they liked it or not. At any rate, if we don't mean to fight, what are we here for?"

"That I cannot say," another laughed; "but I own I am not so eager to fight as you seem to be. We are very comfortable. We ride about the country, we take pretty well what we like; it is better than being in barracks at home. While, on the other hand, it is no joke fighting these Prussians—the fights are not skirmishes, they are battles. It is not a question of a few hundred killed, it is a question of ding-dong fighting, and of fifteen or twenty thousand killed on each side—no joke that. For my part, I am quite content to take it easy at Erfurt, and to leave it to the Austrians to settle matters with these obstinate fellows."

So they continued talking, and Fergus saw that, so far, no news whatever of Frederick's march against Erfurt had reached them. He learned, too, that although there were some outlying bodies to the north, the main bulk of the force lay in and around Erfurt. The contempt with which the French soldiers spoke of the German portion of the army was very great. Each little state had, by the order of the Council of the Confederacy, been compelled to furnish a contingent, even if its

representatives in the council had opposed the proposal, therefore very many of the men had joined unwillingly, while in other cases the French declared that the levy had been made up by hiring idlers and ne'er-do-wells in the towns, so as to avoid having to put the conscription into force in the rural districts.

The officers were declared to be as incapable as the men, and had it not been that an Austrian contingent some five thousand strong had been joined with them, and the drilling largely undertaken by the non-commissioned officers of this force, nothing approaching order or discipline could have been maintained. All the Frenchmen lamented their fortune in having to act with such allies, instead of being with the purely French army that was gradually pressing the Duke of Cumberland to the sea-board.

Fergus waited until the party had left the inn, when the landlord himself came across to hand him his reckoning.

"Bad times, master," he said, "bad times," shaking his head ruefully.

"Yes, they are bad enough, landlord; but I should say that you must be doing a good trade with all these soldiers in the town."

"A good trade!" the landlord repeated. "I am being ruined. Do you not know that in addition to levying a heavy contribution on the town, they issued a regulation settling the prices at which the troops were to be served at beer-shops and inns—breakfast, and you saw what those fellows ate, 4*d.*; a tumbler of wine, 1*d.*; dinner, 5*d.* Why, each item costs me more than double that; and as nobody brings in cattle, for these might be seized on the way and no compensation given, so meat gets dearer. We are waiting until there is none to be had on any terms, and then we shall send representatives to the general, to point out to him that it is absolutely impossible

"AS FERGUS WAS SALLYING OUT A MOUNTED OFFICER DASHED BY AT A GALLOP"

for us to obey the regulations. Ah, these are terrible times! We could not have suffered more than this had Coburg joined Frederick, though they say that Richelieu's French army is plundering even worse in Hanover and the country beyond it, than Soubise is doing here. Moreover, one would rather be plundered by an enemy than by fellows who pretend to come hither as friends. If Frederick would march in here I would open my house free to all comers, and would not grudge the last drop of wine in my cellar."

"There is never any saying," Fergus replied. "The King of Prussia always appears when least expected, and more unlikely things have happened than that he should appear here some fine morning."

Having paid his reckoning he went to the door. As he was sallying out a mounted officer dashed by at a headlong gallop; his horse was flecked with foam, and it was evident that he had ridden far and fast on an important errand. Having nothing to do until he should meet the peasant, Fergus followed the officer at a leisurely pace, and in five minutes came up with the horse held by a soldier at the entrance gate of a very large house. Sentries were pacing up and down in front of it, and officers going in and out.

"Is that the head-quarters of the French general?" he asked a townsman.

"Yes," and the man walked on with a muttered malediction.

A few minutes later several mounted officers rode out and dashed off in haste in various directions.

"There is evidently something up," Fergus said to himself. "Perhaps they have got news of the Prussian approach."

In a quarter of an hour several general officers arrived and entered the house. It was evident that a council of war had been summoned.

Half an hour elapsed, and then a number of aides-de-camp and staff officers rode off in haste. A few minutes later a trumpet sounded a regimental call, and then the assembly. Before it had died away similar calls echoed from all parts of the town; soldiers ran hastily through the streets, mounted officers dashed in every direction, and the citizens came to their doors in surprise at this sudden movement. Fergus had no longer any doubt about the cause of the stir. The great thing now was to ascertain whether the army would advance to take up some strong position outside the town and oppose the Prussian advance, or whether they would march away.

Being fifty thousand in number, the former would appear to be the natural course for a general to adopt, as Frederick had with him but twenty-three thousand men. Of this fact, however, Soubise would be ignorant, and might only have heard that the Prussian army was marching to annihilate him. Before long baggage-waggons began to clatter through the streets; they were being driven westward, and it was in the same direction that the regiments made their way. Fergus followed them to the plain outside the town. The tents had already been struck, the troops as they arrived from the town and camp were marshalled in order, a long train of baggage-waggons were already making their way westward, and there was no longer any grounds for doubt that Soubise was retreating.

It was just eleven o'clock when Fergus returned to the cathedral; the peasant was awaiting him.

"They all seem on the move," the latter said. "I have heard much about them."

"It does not matter now," Fergus replied. "I must get back to your place as quickly as I can."

Not a word was spoken until they had left the town. "They

must be going up into Hanover to join the French army there," the peasant said.

"They are running away. Frederick will be here to-morrow night, or at any rate next day."

"The news seems too good to be true, master. How have you learnt it?"

"I have learnt it from no one here. I am one of the king's officers, and I came on here to find out whether the enemy would be likely to come out and fight, or would bolt when they heard of his advance."

"The Lord be praised!" the man said, piously, taking off his hat as he spoke. "I thought, sir, that there was something curious in your having such a horse, and still more so in your wanting to find out all about the force of the enemy here. But it was no business of mine, and I felt that you must be a friend, for had you been Austrian or French you would have ridden boldly into the town."

As they went along the road they were met by several troops of cavalry riding at full speed.

"Is the way we came this morning the shortest?"

"Yes, sir, by a good mile."

"Then we will return by it," said Fergus.

As soon as they left the main road they went at a run for some distance, and then broke into a fast walk.

In an hour from the time of leaving Erfurt they arrived at the hut.

"I will run along and fetch your horse, sir," the peasant said.

"No, I will go myself. He does not know you, and might refuse to let you come near him."

In a few minutes Fergus returned with his horse. The saddle, bridle, and wallets were quickly put on. Fergus dropped his pistols into his saddle-bags and buckled on the sword he had brought with him. It was not his own, but one

he had bought at starting—a good piece of steel, but with a battered and rusty sheath that showed that it had been lying for weeks, possibly for months, on some field of battle before being picked up. Then, with a word of adieu and thanks to the peasant and his wife, and slipping a crown-piece into the hand of the latter, he mounted and rode off.

CHAPTER X

ROSSBACH

FERGUS knew that there were several cavalry posts ahead, and thought it likely that some of these might be left to give warning of the Prussian approach. He therefore rode across the country for some miles. He had begun to think that he must have gone beyond the limit of their outposts when he saw a hussar pacing across the line in front of him, his beat evidently being between two small woods three or four hundred yards apart. He checked his horse as he saw Fergus approaching. He was a good-tempered looking fellow, and nodded to Fergus, as much as to say that if he could speak his language he should like a chat with him. The latter at once checked his horse and said good-day in French.

"Ah, you speak our language," the soldier said. "I am glad to exchange a word with someone. It is hot here, especially when one's time is up, and one ought to have been relieved an hour ago."

"Yes, I can understand that. I expect you have been forgotten."

"Well, it does not make much difference. I shall get off my next guard in consequence."

"You will have to wait some time before you are relieved if you stop here."

"What do you mean?" the soldier asked.

"I mean that when I left Erfurt your army was all moving west, and as I rode along I met several troops of cavalry galloping to join them."

"That is strange news. Nothing whatever was known when I came out here."

"No, the news only arrived at Erfurt this morning that Frederick's army is within a day's march, and I saw the troops march out and the baggage-waggons on their way before I started. I don't say that your troop may have gone. They may have stopped to form a post of observation."

"Well, at any rate I shall go into the village and see. I ought to have been relieved an hour ago; and if they had such news as that, and had remained there, they would have been sure to have sent to order all videttes to use special vigilance. We have only been posted here as a sort of practice, for we did not think that there was an enemy within a hundred and fifty miles; and now if the news is true we may have the Prussian cavalry coming along at any moment. Well, thank you for warning me," and turning his horse he went off at a gallop. As the outposts would not have been set, except by the party most in advance, Fergus knew that there was now no more risk of falling in with the enemy, unless a cavalry force had been sent forward to endeavour to get an idea of the force of the Prussians; but as the generals had so precipitately decided upon a retreat, it was not likely that they would have ordered any reconnaissance of this kind to be made. He therefore presently regained the main road, and, riding fast, arrived at the place where the Prussians had pitched their camp, thirty miles from Erfurt, having made a twenty-mile

march that day. He dismounted at the house where Keith had established his quarters.

"I have bad news for you, sir," he said. "Word of your coming reached Erfurt at eight o'clock this morning, and by eleven the whole army were on their march westward, bag and baggage."

"That is bad news, Fergus; you could hardly have brought worse. The king had hoped to have struck a heavy blow, and then to be off again to face the Austrians. What strength were they?"

"About fifty thousand."

"How did they get the news of our coming?"

"That I cannot say, sir. I had gone into Erfurt soon after five, and had already picked up a good deal of news from the talk of a party of French non-commissioned officers who were taking breakfast at a small inn, and who, not imagining that I could understand them, talked very freely over affairs. They sat over their meal some time, and I did not go out until they had left. Just as I did so a mounted officer galloped past at a speed that showed he was the bearer of an important despatch. I followed him to Soubise's head-quarters. While there I noticed several mounted officers rode out in great haste. A quarter of an hour later several general officers arrived. There was a consultation for half an hour, and then officers rode off in all directions, and in a few minutes trumpets were sounding and drums beating all over the town. In a very short time a movement began towards the western gate. By ten o'clock the tents were all struck round the town, the waggons loaded, and they were on their way west. An hour later and the whole force was in movement in that direction, and as I issued from the town on this side I met the cavalry that had been scattered among the villages, galloping in. I don't think that there is at the present moment an enemy within ten miles of Erfurt."

"You were in no danger yourself?"

"None at all, sir. I passed the night at a friendly peasant's hut five miles this side of the town, inside their advanced posts. I left my horse in a wood, and my peasant guided me by by-paths to the town. I did not exchange a word with anyone except the landlord of the hotel where I breakfasted. He was bitterly hostile to the enemy. I also spoke to a solitary French vidette, who had in the hurry of their retreat been left behind, and told him that he had best be off as the whole army was in full march for the west."

"Well, if you breakfasted at six this morning you must be hungry. My dinner will be ready in half an hour, and you had better share it with me. I must go now and tell the king the news that you have brought. I said nothing to him about my having sent you."

In twenty minutes the marshal returned.

"The king wishes to see you, Fergus. Of course he is vexed, but he always takes bad news well, unless it is the result of the blunder of one of the officers; he does not say much even then, but it is very bad for that officer when he sees him. Frederick never forgives a blunder."

"Well, Captain Drummond, so you have been playing the spy for us?"

"I have been doing my best, your Majesty."

"And the French are gone bag and baggage?"

"Yes, sire, they have gone off west."

"To perch themselves somewhere among the mountains, I suppose. Perhaps they will get bolder presently when they hear that they are more than double my strength. Did you learn anything more than what Marshal Keith has told me?"

"I heard a great deal of talk among a party of French non-commissioned officers, sire. They expressed great dissatisfaction with their general, and at the long delays. They also

spoke with absolute contempt of the Confederacy army, both officers and men, and said that if it had not been for the drilling by the Austrian non-commissioned officers they would be nothing better than a rabble."

"I daresay Soubise is of the same opinion," the king said, "and wants them to have a few weeks' more drill before he sets them in line of battle. However, I have no doubt we shall manage to bring him to book before we return. Well, I am obliged to you for your zeal, Captain Drummond, and although Keith tells me that you got in without being questioned, such business is always dangerous. Mayhap next time you will have a better opportunity for distinguishing yourself. As you managed to pass so freely among them after you made your escape from prison, you can clearly be trusted on work of this kind."

Fergus saluted and retired. The next morning the troops started as usual at daybreak. They were to make but a short march, for they had no longer any occasion for speed, and they had made the hundred and fifty miles at a very rapid pace; but when they halted Frederick with the cavalry rode straight on into Erfurt.

"Don't wait to put on your uniform now," Keith said to Fergus on his return from the royal quarters, "dinner is waiting, and I am ready if you are not. Lindsay is going to dine with me too."

"Well, Lindsay," the marshal said as the latter entered, "you see the advantages of this young fellow being able to speak German well. If you had been taken prisoner at Lobositz you would have been fast in Spielberg at present, and you see he is now able to undertake perilous missions, and peril means promotion."

"I quite see that, Marshal," Lindsay said, with a smile; "but though I can get on with French fairly enough, my

tongue doesn't seem to be able to form these crack-jaw German words, and you see, Marshal, it is not the only one that does not. I think, sir, that, bad as my German is, it is not much worse than your own, and you have been here much longer than I have."

The marshal laughed. "You are right. I cannot say half a dozen German words, but you see I have not had your motive for acquiring it, and cannot very well get promotion. And again, it would not do for me to speak better German than the King of Prussia, who, beyond a few words necessary for animating his troops on occasion, knows very little German himself. For general work here French is amply sufficient, because every officer speaks it; but, as you see, German is very useful too to a young officer who wishes to push himself forward, and is willing to undertake special work of this kind."

"But even then, Marshal, he would have no advantage over a Prussian officer who speaks French."

"It depends a good deal upon the Prussian officer; the greater portion of them are mere machines—splendid fighting machines, no doubt, but of no great use outside their own work. Anyone could detect with half an eye nineteen out of twenty of them, dress them how you would, disguise them as you like. They step the regulation length, bring their foot down the regulation way, are as stiff as if they had swallowed a ramrod. They have neither subtleness nor adaptability. They are so accustomed to obey that they have almost lost the power of originating, and would be taken and shot before they were in the enemy's lines ten minutes. Now, Fergus has the advantage of knowing both languages, and of being quick-witted and sharp."

The next two months were passed in marches to and fro. Seidlitz with some cavalry took possession of Gotha, to the great satisfaction of the duke and duchess, and the king him-

self rode over and dined with them. While Seidlitz remained there as governor, with a couple of regiments of horse, a strong body of French and Austrian hussars, grenadiers and artillery marched against Gotha. Seidlitz, having so few men to oppose them, evacuated the place, and the enemy marched into it in triumphant procession. The duke and duchess made the best of matters, and invited all the principal officers to a banquet. Just as they were sitting down to this Seidlitz with his Prussians reappeared, his men being so artfully scattered about that they appeared a great deal stronger than they were. The enemy were seized with panic; Soubise and his generals mounted in great haste, and in a few minutes the whole were retreating at top speed, Seidlitz pursuing for some distance, killing thirty and taking sixty prisoners, with a large amount of baggage and plunder, and then returning to Gotha to eat the dinner prepared for the enemy.

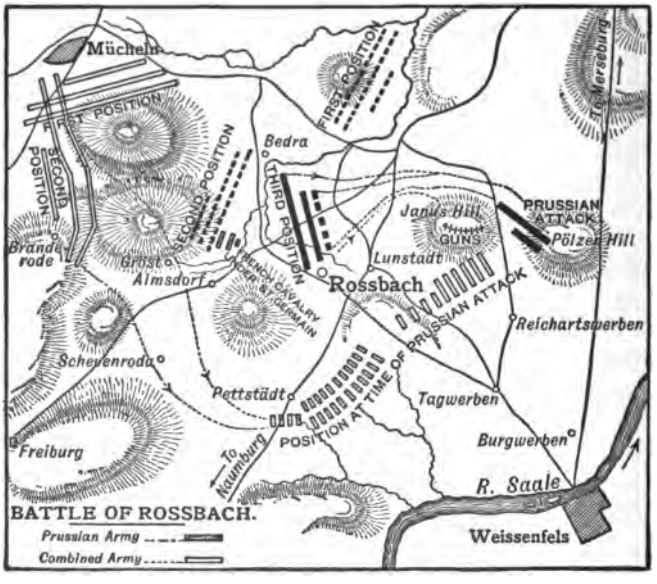
Ferdinand of Brunswick, with his division, had been sent off to check, if possible, the movements of the French army under Richelieu, near Magdeburg. In October came the startling news that Berlin itself was threatened, and that a force, said to be fifteen thousand strong, under General Haddick, was in rapid motion towards it. Prince Maurice was ordered to hasten to its defence, and the king also moved in that direction. The invading force was but four thousand strong. Their numbers, however, were so magnified by rumour that the governor of Berlin, who had but four thousand troops, did not venture to oppose them, but sent the royal family and archives away under a strong escort. Haddick occupied a suburb of the city, but knowing that as soon as his real force was known he would be hotly opposed, and receiving news that Prince Maurice was rapidly approaching, demanded a ransom of £45,000, and finally accepted £27,000 and then hurried away.

Prince Maurice arrived twenty-four hours later. The consequences of this little success—magnified by report into "Berlin captured, Prussian royal family in flight"—turned out very advantageous to Frederick. The enthusiasm in Paris and Vienna was enormous, and orders were despatched to the armies to set to without further delay and finish the work. Fifteen thousand men were sent from Richelieu's army to reinforce Soubise, who thereupon issued from his mountain stronghold and marched against Leipzig. Frederick, however, arrived there first, Ferdinand and Maurice joining him a day or two later; and while waiting there Frederick received the joyful news that England requested him to appoint Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick commander-in-chief of the army until now commanded by the Duke of Cumberland, who had just sailed for England.

Pitt had now risen to almost absolute power in England, and was busied in reforming the abuses in the army and navy, dismissing incapable officials, and preparing to render some efficient aid to its hard-pressed ally. The proposal that Prince Ferdinand should assume the command of the army—whose efforts had hitherto been rendered nugatory by the utter incompetence of the Duke of Cumberland, who, although personally as brave as a lion, was absolutely ignorant of war—afforded immense satisfaction to the king. No better choice could have been made. Ferdinand was related to the royal families both of England and Prussia. He was a capable general, prudent and at the same time enterprising, firm under difficulties, ready to seize opportunities, and under his command there was no doubt that the northern army, which had hitherto been useless, and had only been saved from absolute destruction by the incompetence of the French generals, would now play a useful part. On October 30th Soubise, in spite of his orders to fight, and the fact that he

had double the strength of the Prussians, fell back before them. Soubise himself felt no confidence in his troops, but upon the other hand his officers and those of the Confederate army were puffed up with vanity, and remonstrated hotly against retreat.

The next day Frederick came in sight of Soubise's army, which was camped on a height near the town of Weissenfels.



Frederick had but one-half of his force with him, the other half, under Keith, being still detached. Five thousand men garrisoned Weissenfels, but Frederick made short work of the place; his cannon burst down the gates, and his troops rushed forward with all speed, but the garrison fled across the bridge over the Saale, which had already been prepared for

burning, and they set it on fire in such haste that four hundred were unable to cross and were made prisoners. The fugitives joined their army on the other side of the Elbe, and its guns opened upon the burning bridge, to prevent the Prussians from trying to extinguish the flames.

The Prussians returned the fire, and the artillery duel was kept up until three o'clock, by which time the bridge was consumed. Frederick had already fixed upon a spot suitable for the erection of another, and during the night, while the enemy were falling back to take up a fresh position upon higher ground, the engineers, working diligently, succeeded in throwing a bridge across. Keith arrived at Merseburg the next morning; a strong force lay opposite ready to dispute the passage; but when Soubise found that the king was crossing by his new bridge, he called in all his detachments and marched away to a strong position, and there set himself in array ready to receive an attack. Keith's bridges were finished on the 3d of November, and that afternoon he crossed and joined Frederick.

On the 4th the army was on the move by two o'clock in the morning. A bright moon was shining, and by its light it was discovered that the enemy had shifted his position for one much stronger, with approaches protected by patches of wood and bog; the Prussian army therefore marched back to their camp, the king hoping that, being so far from their base of supplies, the enemy would be forced erelong to make some movement that would afford him a chance of attacking them under better circumstances.

The ground from Weissenfels rises very gradually to a height of a hundred and twenty feet or so, which in so flat a country is regarded as a hill. On this slight swelling are several small villages. Of these Rossbach is the principal, standing high up on its crest. Here Frederick's right wing

was posted, while his left was at Bedra. The king took up his quarters at a large house in Rossbach, and from its roof at eight o'clock on the morning of the 5th he saw that the enemy were getting into motion and moving away towards their left.

The movement had begun much earlier. Half an hour later they had passed through the village of Grost, and were apparently making their way to Freiburg, where they had some magazines. Hoping to have a chance of attacking their rear, Frederick ordered the cavalry to saddle and the whole army to be in readiness, and then sat down to dinner with his officers at noon. Little did he dream at the time that the slow and clumsy movement that he was watching was intended by the enemy to end in a flank attack on himself.

On the previous day Soubise with his generals, looking down on the Prussian camp, had reckoned their force at ten thousand; in reality they had seen only a portion of their camp, the site being hidden by a dip of the ground. Even Soubise thought that, with the odds of over five to one in his favour, he could fight a battle with a certainty of success, and planned a masterly march by which he would place himself on Frederick's left and rear, drive him into the bend made by the Saale, and annihilate his army. In his enthusiasm at this happy idea he sent off a courier to carry the news to Versailles that he was about to annihilate the Prussian army, and take the king prisoner.

Frederick's dinner was prolonged, there was nothing to be done, and patience was one of the king's strong points. At two o'clock an officer who had remained on watch on the housetop hurried down with news that the enemy had suddenly turned to the left. The king went up to the roof with his officers, and at once divined the intention of his foes. It was a glorious moment for him; at last, after three weary

months, he was to meet them in battle. Instantly his orders were given, and in half an hour the Prussian army was all in movement, with the exception of some irregular corps which were left to occupy the attention of the enemy's horse, which had been posted as if to threaten Rossbach. By the line taken the Prussians were at once hidden behind the crest of the hill from the enemy; and Soubise, believing that the Prussians, being afraid of his attack, were marching away with all speed for Keith's bridge at Merseburg, accordingly hurried on his cavalry, and ordered the infantry to go at a double for the purpose of capturing the runaway Prussians.

In the meantime Seidlitz with four thousand horse trotted briskly along until he reached, still concealed from the enemy's sight, the spot towards which they were hurrying, in two great columns headed by seven thousand cavalry. He allowed them to move forward until he was on their flank, and then dashed over the crest of the hill and charged like a thunderbolt upon them.

Taken completely by surprise, the enemy's cavalry had scarce time to form; two Austrian regiments and two French were alone able to do so. But there was no withstanding the impetus of the Prussian charge. They rode right through the disordered cavalry, turned, formed, and re-charged, and four times cut their way through them, until they broke away in headlong flight, and were pursued by Seidlitz until out of sight from the hill, when he turned and waited to see where he could find an opportunity of striking another blow.

By this time Frederick, with the infantry, was now pouring over the crest of the hill, their advance heralded by the fire of twenty-four guns. Rapidly in echelon they approached the enemy. In vain Soubise endeavoured to face round the column, thus taken in flank, to meet the coming storm. He was seconded by Broglio and the commander of the Con-

federate army, but the two columns were jammed together, and all were in confusion at this astounding and unexpected attack. Orders were unheard or disobeyed, and everything was still in utter disorder when six battalions of Prussian infantry hurled themselves upon them. When forty paces distant, they poured in their first terrible volley, and then continued their fire as fast as they could load, creating great havoc among the French troops on whom they had fallen, while away on each flank the Prussian artillery made deep gaps in the line.

Soon the mass, helpless under this storm of fire, wavered and shook, and then Seidlitz, who had been concealed with his cavalry in a hollow a short distance away, hurled himself like a thunderbolt on their rear, and in a moment they broke up in headlong flight. In less than half an hour from the first appearance of the Prussians on the hill, the struggle had ended, and an army of from fifty to sixty thousand men was a mob of fugitives defeated by a force of but twenty-two thousand men, not above half of whom were engaged. The loss of the allies was three thousand killed and wounded, five thousand prisoners and seventy-two guns, while the Prussians lost but one hundred and sixty-five killed, and three hundred and seventy-six wounded. The victory was one of the most remarkable and surprising ever gained, for these figures by no means represent the full loss to the defeated.

The German portion of the army, after being chased for many miles, scattered in all directions, and only one regiment reached Erfurt in military order, and in two days the whole of the men were on their way to their homes in the various states composing the Confederation. The French were in no less disgraceful a condition; plundering as they went, a mere disorganized rabble, they continued their flight until fifty-five miles from the field of battle, and were long before they gath-

ered again in fighting order. The joy caused in Prussia and in England by this astonishing victory was shared largely by the inhabitants of the country through which the French army had marched. Everywhere they had plundered and pillaged, as if they had been moving through an enemy's country instead of one they had professed to come to deliver. The Protestant inhabitants had everywhere been most cruelly maltreated, the churches wrecked, and the pastors treated as criminals; the greater portion of Germany therefore regarded the defeat of the French as a matter for gratification rather than the reverse.

In England the result was enormous. It had the effect of vastly strengthening Pitt's position, and twenty thousand British troops were erelong despatched to join the army under the Duke of Brunswick, which was now called the allied army, and from this time the French force under Richelieu ceased to be dangerous to Frederick. France and England were old antagonists, and entered upon a duel of their own, a duel that was to cost France Canada and much besides, to establish England's naval preponderance, and to extinguish French influence in the Netherlands.

Fergus Drummond was not under fire at the memorable battle of Rossbach. Keith's division was not in fact engaged, the affair having terminated before it arrived. Keith, however, had ridden to the position on the brow of the hill where the king had stationed himself, and his staff following him had the satisfaction of seeing the enemy's heavy columns melt into a mass of fugitives, and spread in all directions over the country like dust driven before a sudden whirlwind.

"What next, I wonder?" Fergus said to Lindsay, who had three days before been promoted to the rank of captain, as much to the satisfaction of Fergus as to his own.

"I suppose some more marching," Lindsay replied. "You

may be sure that we shall be off east again to try conclusions with Prince Karl. Bevern seems to be making a sad mess of it there. Of course he is tremendously outnumbered, thirty thousand men against eighty thousand; but he has fallen back into Silesia without making a single stand, and suffered Prince Karl to plant himself between Breslau and Schweidnitz, and the Prince is besieging the latter town with twenty thousand men, while with sixty thousand he is facing Bevern."

Four days after the victory, indeed, Frederick set out with thirteen thousand men, leaving Prince Henry to maintain the line of the Saale and guard Saxony, while Marshal Keith was to go into Bohemia, raise contributions there, and threaten as far as might be the Austrian posts in that country.

Fergus, however, went with the king's army, the king having said to the marshal: "Keith, lend me that young aide-de-camp of yours. I have seen how he can be trusted to carry a despatch at whatever risk to his life. He is ingenious and full of devices, and he has luck, and luck goes for a great deal. I like him too; I have observed that he is always lively and cheery, even at the end of the longest day's work. I notice too that, even though your relation, he never becomes too familiar, and his talk will be refreshing when I want something to distract my thoughts from weighty matters."

So Fergus went with the king, who could ill afford to lose Keith from his side. With none was he more friendly and intimate, and now that Schwerin had gone he relied upon him more implicitly than upon any other of his officers. But Keith had been for some time unwell. He was suffering from asthma, and other ailments that rendered rapid travel painful to him, and he would obtain more rest and ease in Bohemia than he could find in the rapid journey the king intended to make. On the fifth day of his march Frederick heard, to his stupefaction, that Schweidnitz had surrendered. The place was an

extremely strong one, and the king had relied confidently upon its holding out for two or three months. Its fortifications were constructed in the best manner; it was abundantly supplied with cannon, ammunition, and provisions, and its surrender was inexcusable.

The fault was, doubtless, to a large degree, that of its commandant, who was a man of no resolution or resources; but it was also partly due to the fact that a portion of the garrison were Saxons, who had at Pirna been obliged to enter the Prussian service. Great numbers of these deserted, a hundred and eighty of them in one day going over from an advanced post to the enemy. With troops like these there could be no assurance that any post would be firmly held—a fact that might well shake the confidence of any commander in his power of resistance. The blow was none the less severe to Frederick, from being partly the result of his own mistaken step of enrolling men bitterly hostile, in the ranks of the army. Still, disastrous as the news was, it did not alter his resolution, and at even greater speed than before he continued his march. Sometimes of an evening he sent for Fergus and chatted with him pleasantly for an hour or two, asking him many questions of his life in Scotland, and discoursing familiarly on such matters, but never making any allusion to military affairs.

On the tenth day of the march they arrived at Gorlitz, where another piece of bad news reached Frederick. Prince Karl, after taking Schweidnitz, had fallen with sixty thousand men on Bevern. He had crossed by five bridges across the Loe, but each column was met by a Prussian force strongly intrenched. For the space of fifteen hours the battles had raged over seven or eight miles of country. Five times the Austrians had attacked, five times had they been rolled back again, but at nine o'clock at night they were successful, more or less, in four of their attacks, while the Prussian left wing,

under the command of Ziethen, had driven its assailants across the river again. During the night Bevern had drawn off, marched through Breslau, and crossed the Oder, leaving eighty cannon and eight thousand killed and wounded—a tremendous loss, indeed, when the army at daybreak had been thirty thousand strong. Bevern himself rode out to reconnoitre in the gray light of the morning, attended only by a groom, and fell in with an Austrian outpost. He was carried to Vienna, but being a distant relation of the emperor was sent home again without ransom.

It was the opinion of Frederick that he had given himself up intentionally, and on his return he was ordered at once to take up his former official post at Stettin, where he conducted himself so well in the struggle against the Russian armies that two years later he was restored to Frederick's favour. As if this misfortune was not great enough, two days later came the news that Breslau had surrendered without firing a shot, and this when it was known that the king was within two days' march and pressing forward to its relief. Here ninety-eight guns and an immense store and magazine were lost to Prussia. Frederick straightway issued orders that the general who had succeeded Bevern should be put under arrest for not having at once thrown his army into Breslau, appointed Ziethen in his place, and ordered him to bring the army round to Glogau and meet him at Parchwitz on December 2d, which Ziethen punctually did.

In spite of the terrible misfortunes that had befallen him, Frederick was still undaunted. Increased as it was by the arrival of Ziethen, his force was but a third of the strength of the Austrians. The latter were flushed with success, while Ziethen's troops were discouraged by defeat, and his own portion of the force worn out by their long and rapid marches and by the failure of the object for which they had come.

Calling his generals together on the 3d, he recounted the misfortunes that had befallen them, and told them that his one trust in this terrible position was in their qualities and valour, and that he intended to engage the enemy as soon as he found them, and that they must beat them or all of them perish in the battle.

Enthusiastically the generals declared that they would conquer or die with him, and among the soldiers the spirit was equally strong, for they had implicit confidence in their king and a well-justified trust in their own valour and determination. That evening Frederick, eager as he was to bring the terrible situation to a final issue, cannot but have felt that it would have been too desperate an undertaking to have attacked the enemy, posted as they were with a river, known as Schweidnitz Water, and many other natural difficulties covering their front, and having their flanks strengthened, as was the Austrian custom, with field-works and batteries. Fortunately the Austrians settled the difficulty by moving out from their stronghold.

Daun had counselled their remaining there, but Prince Karl and the great majority of his military advisers agreed that it would be a shameful thing that ninety thousand men should shut themselves up to avoid an attack by a force of but one-third their own strength, and that it was in all respects preferable to march out and give battle, in which case the Prussians would be entirely destroyed; whereas, if merely repulsed in an attack on a strong position, a considerable proportion might escape and give trouble in the future. The Austrians, indeed, having captured Schweidnitz and Breslau, defeated Bevern, and in the space of three weeks made themselves masters of a considerable portion of Silesia, were in no small degree puffed up, and had fallen anew to despising Frederick. The blow dealt them at Prague had been obliterated by their success at

Kolin, and Frederick's later success over the French and Federal army was not considered by them as a matter affecting themselves, although several Austrian regiments had been among Soubise's force.

The officers were very scornful over the aggressive march of Frederick's small army, which they derisively called the Potsdam Guards' Parade, and many were the jokes cut at the military messes at its expense. The difference, then, with which the two armies regarded the coming battle was great indeed. On the one side there was the easy confidence of victory, the satisfaction that at length this troublesome little king had put himself in their power; on the other a deep determination to conquer or to die, a feeling that, terrible as the struggle must be, great as were the odds against them, they might yet, did each man do his duty, come out the victors in the struggle.

"And what think you of this matter, lad?" Frederick said, laying his hand familiarly on the young captain's shoulder.

"I know nothing about it, your Majesty, but, like the rest, I feel confident that somehow you will pull us through. Of one thing I am sure, that all that is possible for the men to do your soldiers will accomplish."

"Well, we shall see. It is well that I know all the country round here, for many a review have I held of the garrison of Breslau, on the very ground where we are about to fight. Their position is a very strong one, and I am afraid that crafty old fox Daun will here, as he did at Prague, persuade Prince Karl to hide behind his batteries. Were it not for that I should feel confident, whereas I now but feel hopeful; still, I doubt not that we shall find our way in somehow."

CHAPTER XI

LEUTHEN

AT four in the morning, on Sunday, December 4th, Frederick marched from Parchwitz, intending to make Neumarkt, a small town some fourteen miles off, his quarters. When within two or three miles of this town he learned, to his deep satisfaction, that the Austrians had just established a great bakery there, and that a party of engineers were marking out the site for a camp, also that there were but a thousand Croats in the town. The news was satisfactory, indeed, for two reasons: the first being that the bakery would be of great use for his own troops; the second, that it was clear that the Austrians intended to advance across the Schweidnitz Water to give battle. It was evident that they could have had no idea that he was pressing on so rapidly, or they would never have established their bakery so far in advance and protected by so small a force.

He lost no time in taking advantage of their carelessness, but sent a regiment of cavalry to seize the hills on both sides of the town, then marched rapidly forward, burst in the gates, and hurled the Croats in utter confusion from Neumarkt, while the cavalry dashed down and cut off their retreat. One hundred and twenty of them were killed and five hundred and seventy taken prisoners. In the town the Austrian bakery was found to be in full work, and eighty thousand bread rations, still hot, were ready for delivery. This initial success, and the unexpected treat of hot bread, raised the spirits of the troops greatly, and was looked upon as a happy augury.

Two or three hours before Neumarkt had been captured

the Austrian army was crossing the river, and presently received the unpleasant news of what had happened. Surprised at the news that the Prussians were so near, their generals at once set to work to choose a good position. This was not a difficult task, for the country was swampy, with little wooded rises and many villages. They planted their right wing at the village of Nypern, which was practically unapproachable on account of deep peat-bogs. Their centre was at a larger village named Leuthen, their left at Sagschütz. The total length of its front was about six miles.

The Prussians started before daybreak next morning in four columns, Frederick riding on ahead with the vanguard. When near Borne, some eight miles from Neumarkt, he caught sight in the dim light of a considerable body of horse stretching across the road in front of him as far as he could make out the line. The Prussian cavalry were at once ordered to charge down on their left flank. The enemy proved to be five regiments of cavalry placed there to guard the army from surprise. They, however, were themselves surprised, and were at once overthrown and driven in headlong flight to take shelter behind their right wing at Nypern, five hundred and forty being taken prisoners, and a large number being killed or wounded. Frederick rode on through Borne, ascended a small hill called the Scheuberg to the right of the road, and as the light increased could from that point make out the Austrian army drawn up in battle array, and stretching from Nypern to Sagschütz.

Well was it for him that he had reviewed troops over the same ground, and knew all the bogs and morasses that guarded the Austrian front. For a long time he sat there on horseback studying the possibilities of the situation. The Austrian right he regarded as absolutely impregnable. Leuthen might be attacked with some chance of success, but Sagschütz offered

by far the most favourable opening for attack. The formation of the ground offered special facilities for the movement being effected without the Austrians being aware of what was taking place, for there was a depression behind the swells and broken ground in front of the Austrian centre, by which the Prussians could march from Borne unseen by the enemy until they approached Sagschütz. It was three hours after Frederick had taken up his place before the four columns had all reached Borne. As soon as they were in readiness there, they were ordered to march with all speed as far as Radaxford, thence to march in oblique order against the Austrian left.

The Austrians all this time could observe a group of horsemen on the hill, moving sometimes this way, sometimes that, but more than this they could not see. The conjectures were various as hour passed after hour. Daun believed that the Prussians must have marched away south, with the intention of falling upon the magazines in Bohemia, and that the cavalry seen moving along the hills were placed there to defend the Prussians from being taken in flank or in rear while thus marching. General Lucchesi, who commanded the Austrian right wing, was convinced that the cavalry formed the Prussian right wing, and that the whole army, concealed behind the slopes, was marching to fall upon him.

In the belfry of the church at Leuthen, on the tops of windmills, and on other points of vantage, Austrian generals with their staffs were endeavouring to obtain a glimpse beyond those tiresome swells, and to discover what was going on behind them, but in vain. There were the cavalry moving occasionally from crest to crest, but nothing beyond that. Lucchesi got more and more uneasy, and sent message after message to head-quarters that he was about to be attacked, and must have a large reinforcement of horse. The prince and Daun at first

scoffed at the idea, knowing that the bogs in front of Nypern were impassable; but at last he sent a message to the effect that if the cavalry did not come he would not be responsible for the issue.

It was thought, therefore, that he must have some good ground for his insistence, and Daun sent off the reserve of horse, and several other regiments drawn from the left wing, and himself went off at a trot at their head to see what was the matter. It was just as he started that the Prussians—with their music playing and the men singing

"Gieb dass ich thu mit fleiss was mir zu thun gebuhret,"
"Grant that with zeal and strength this day I do"—

had passed Radaxford and reached Lobetintz, and were about to advance in an oblique line to the attack. The king saw with delight the removal of so large a body of horse from the very point against which his troops would in half an hour be hurling themselves. Nothing could have suited his plans better. At a rapid pace, and with a precision and order as perfect as if upon level ground, suddenly the Prussians poured over the swells on the flank of Sagschütz. Nadasti, who commanded the Austrians there, was struck with astonishment at the spectacle of the Prussian army, which he believed to be far away, pouring down on his flank. The heads of the four columns, the artillery, and Ziethen's cavalry appeared simultaneously, marching swiftly, and making no pause. Being a good general, he lost not a moment in endeavouring to meet the storm. His left was thrown back a little, a battery of fourteen guns at the angle so formed opened fire, and he launched his cavalry against that of Ziethen.

For the moment Ziethen's men were pushed back, but the fire from an infantry battalion close by checked the Austrian horse; they fell back out of range, and Ziethen, making a

counter charge, drove them away. In the meantime the Prussian infantry as they advanced poured a storm of fire upon the Austrian line, aided by a battery of ten heavy guns that Prince Maurice, who commanded here, had planted on a rise. A clump of fir-trees held by Croats in advance of the Austrian line was speedily cleared, and then the Prussians broke down the abattis that protected the enemy's front, charged furiously against the infantry, and drove these before them, capturing Nadasti's battery.

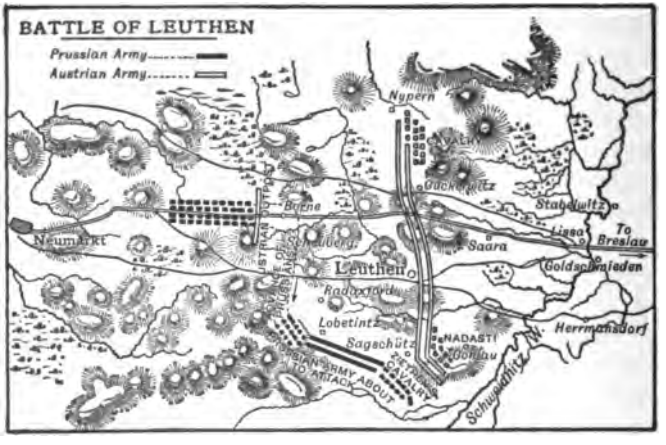
In ten minutes after the beginning of the fight the position of the Austrian left was already desperate, the whole Prussian army was concentrated against it, and, being on its flank, crumpled the line up as it advanced. Prince Karl's aides-de-camp galloped at the top of their speed to bring Daun and the cavalry back again, and Austrian battalions from the centre were hurried down to aid Nadasti's, but were impeded by the retreating troops, and the confusion thickened until it was brought to a climax by Ziethen's horse, which had been unable to act until now. But fir-wood, quagmire, and abattis had all been passed by the Prussians, and they dashed into the mass, sabring and trampling down, and taking whole battalions prisoners.

Prince Karl exerted himself to the utmost to check the Prussian advance. Batteries were brought up and advantageously posted at Leuthen, heavy bodies of infantry occupied the village and its church, and took post so as to present a front to the advancing tide.

Another quarter of an hour and the battle might have been retrieved; but long before the dispositions were all effected the Prussians were at hand. Nevertheless, by great diligence the Austrians had to some extent succeeded. Leuthen was the centre of the new position. Lucchesi was hastening up, while Nadasti swung backwards and tried, as he arrived, to

form the left flank of the new position. All this was being done under a storm of shot from the whole of the Prussian artillery, which was so terrible that many battalions fell into confusion as fast as they arrived.

Leuthen, a straggling hamlet of over a mile in length, and with two or three streets of scattered houses, barns, farm buildings, and two churches, was crowded with troops ready to fight but unable to do so, line being jammed upon line un-



til sometimes a hundred deep, pressed constantly behind by freshly arriving battalions, and in front by the advancing Prussians. Some regiments were almost without officers.

Into this confused, straggling, helpless mass, prevented from opening out by the houses and inclosures, the Prussians, ever keeping their formation, poured their volleys with terrible effect, in such fashion as Drake's perfectly handled ships poured their broadsides into the huge helpless Spanish galleons at Gravelines. With a like dogged courage, as that shown by the Spanish, the Austrian masses suffered almost passively,

while those occupying the houses and churches facing the Prussians resisted valiantly and desperately. From every window, every wall, their musketry fire flashed out, the resistance round the churchyard being specially stubborn. The churchyard had a high and strong wall, and so terrible was the fire from the roof of the church and other spots of advantage that the tide of Prussian victory was arrested for a time.

At last they made a rush. The churchyard gate was burst in, and the Austrians driven out. Leuthen was not yet won, but Frederick now brought up the left wing, which had till this time been held in reserve. These came on with levelled bayonets and rushed into the fight. The king was, as always, in the thick of the battle, giving his orders as coolly as if at a review, sending fresh troops where required, changing the arrangements as opportunity offered, keeping the whole machine in due order, and by his presence animating all with the determination to win or die, and an almost equal readiness to accept either alternative. At last, after an hour's stubborn resistance, the Austrians were hurled out of Leuthen, still sternly resisting, still contesting every foot of the ground.

Lucchesi now saw an opportunity of retrieving with his great cavalry force the terrible consequences of his own blunder, and led them impetuously down upon the flank of the Prussians. But Frederick had prepared for such a stroke, and had placed Draisen with the left wing of the cavalry in a hollow sheltered from the fire of the Austrian batteries, and bade him do nothing, attempt nothing, but cover the right flank of the infantry from the Austrian horse. He accordingly let Lucchesi charge down with his cavalry, and then rushed out on his rear and fell suddenly and furiously upon him. Astounded at this sudden and unexpected attack, and with their ranks swept by a storm of Prussian bullets, the Austrian cavalry broke and fled in all directions, Lucchesi having paid for his fault by dying

fighting to the last. His duty thus performed, Draisen was free to act, and fell upon the flank and rear of the Austrian infantry; and in a few minutes the battle was over and the Austrians in full retreat. They made, however, another attempt to stand at Saara, but it was hopeless, and they were soon pushed backwards again, and, hotly pressed, poured over the four bridges across the Schweidnitz river, and for the most part continued their flight to Breslau.

Until the Austrians had crossed the river the Prussian cavalry were on their rear sabring and taking prisoners, while the infantry were halted at Saara, the sun having now set. Exhausted as they were by their work, which had begun at midnight and continued until now without pause or break, not yet was their task completely done. The king riding up the line asked if any battalion would volunteer to follow him to Lissa, a village on the river bank. Three battalions stepped out. The landlord of the little inn, carrying a lantern, walked by the king's side. As they approached the village ten or twelve musket-shots flashed out in the fields to the right. They were aimed at the lantern, but no one was hurt.

There were other shots from Lissa, and it was evident that the village was still not wholly evacuated. The infantry rushed forward, scattered through the fields, and drove out the lurking Croats. The king rode quietly on into the village and entered the principal house. To his astonishment he found it full of Austrian officers, who could easily have carried him off, his infantry being still beyond the village. They had but a small force remaining there, and believing that the Prussians had halted for the night at Saara they were as much astonished as Frederick at his entrance. The king had the presence of mind to hide his surprise.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" he said. "Is there still room left for me, do you think?"

The Austrian officers, supposing, of course, that he had a large force outside, bowed deeply, escorted him to the best room in the house, and then slipped out at the back, collected what troops they could as they went, and hurried across the bridge. The Prussians were not long in entering, and very speedily cleared out the rest of the Austrians; they then crossed the bridge, and with a few guns followed in pursuit. The army at Saara, on hearing the firing, betook itself again to arms and marched to the king's assistance, the twenty-five thousand men and their bands again joining in the triumphant hymn, "*Nun danket alle Gott*," as they tramped through the darkness. When they arrived at Lissa they found that all was safe, and bivouacked in the fields.

Never was there a greater or more surprising victory, never one in which the military genius of the commander was more strikingly shown. The Austrians were in good heart. They were excellent soldiers and brave, well provided with artillery, and strongly placed, and yet they were signally defeated by a force little over one-third their number. Had there been two more hours of daylight the Austrians would have been not only routed but altogether crushed. Their loss was ten thousand left on the field, of whom three thousand were killed. Twelve thousand were taken prisoners, and one hundred and sixteen cannon captured. To this loss must be added that of seventeen thousand prisoners, taken when Breslau surrendered twelve days later, together with a vast store of cannon and ammunition, including everything taken so shortly before from Bevern. Liegnitz surrendered, and the whole of Silesia, with the exception only of Schweidnitz, was again wrested from the Austrians. Thus in killed, wounded, and prisoners the loss of the Austrians amounted to as much as the total force of the Prussians. The latter lost in killed eleven hundred and forty-one, and in wounded about five

thousand. Prince Maurice, upon whose division the brunt of the battle had fallen, was promoted to the rank of field-marshal.

Fergus Drummond had been with the king throughout that terrible day. Until the battle began his duties had been light, being confined to the carrying of orders to Prince Maurice, after which he took his place among the staff, and, dismounting, chatted with his acquaintances while Karl held his horse. When, however, the fir-tree wood was carried, and the king rode forward and took his place there during the attack upon the Austrian position at Sagschütz matters became more lively. The balls from the Austrian batteries sung overhead, and sent branches flying and trees crashing down. Sagschütz won, the king followed the advancing line, and the air was alive with bullets and case-shot. After that Fergus knew little more of the battle, being incessantly employed in carrying orders through the thick of it to generals commanding brigades, and even to battalions.

The roar of battle was so tremendous that his horse, maddened with the din and the sharp whiz of the bullets, at times was well-nigh unmanageable, and occupied his attention almost to the exclusion of other thoughts, especially after it had been struck by a bullet in the hind-quarters, and had come to understand that those strange and maddening noises meant danger. Not until after all was over was Fergus aware of the escapes he had had. A bullet had cut away an ornament from his head-dress, one of his reins had been severed at a distance of an inch or two from his hand, a bullet had pierced the tail of his coatee and buried itself in the cantle of his saddle, and the iron guard of his claymore had been pierced. However, on his return to the king after carrying a despatch he was able to curb his own excitement and that of his horse, and to make the formal military salute as he reported, in a calm and quiet

"THE ROAR OF BATTLE WAS SO TREMENDOUS THAT HIS HORSE WAS WELL-NIGH UNMANAGEABLE."

voice, that he had carried out the orders with which he had been charged.

It was with great gratification that he heard the king say that evening, as he and his staff supped together at the inn at Lissa:

"You have done exceedingly well to-day, Captain Drummond; I am very pleased with you. You were always at my elbow when I wanted you, and I observed that you were never flurried or excited, though, indeed, there would have been good excuse for a young soldier being so in such a hurly-burly. You are over young for further promotion for a year or two, but I must find some other way of testifying my satisfaction at your conduct." And, indeed, when the list of promotions for bravery in the field was published a few days later, Fergus's name appeared among those who received the decoration of the Prussian military order, an honour fully as much valued as promotion. For a time he lost the service of Karl, who had been seriously although not dangerously wounded, just before the Austrians were driven out of Leuthen.

The news of the battle filled the Confederates with stupefaction and dismay. Prince Karl was at once recalled, and was relieved from military employment, Daun being appointed to the supreme command. The prince withdrew to his government of the Netherlands, and there passed the remainder of his days in peace and quiet. His army was hunted by Ziethen's cavalry to Königgrätz, losing two thousand prisoners and a large amount of baggage, and thirty-seven thousand men only of the eighty thousand that stood in battle array at Leuthen reached the sheltering walls of the fortress, and those in so dilapidated and worn-out a condition that by the end of a week after arriving there, no less than twenty-two thousand were in hospital. Thus, after eight months of constant and

weary anxiety, Frederick, by the two heavy blows he had dealt successfully at the Confederates, stood in a far better position than he had occupied at the opening of the first campaign, when, as his enemies fondly believed, Prussia would be captured and divided without the smallest difficulty.

Frederick wintered at Breslau, whither came many visitors from Prussia, and there was a constant round of gayeties and festivity. Frederick himself desired nothing so much as peace. Once or twice there had been some faint hope that this might be brought about by his favourite sister, Wilhelmina, who had been ceaseless in her efforts to effect it; but the two empresses and the Pompadour were alike bent on avenging themselves on the king, and the reverses that they had suffered but increased their determination to overwhelm him. Great as Frederick's success had been, it did not blind him to the fact that his position was almost hopeless. When the war began he had an army of a hundred and fifty thousand of the finest soldiers in the world. The two campaigns had made frightful gaps in their ranks.

At Prague he had fought with eighty thousand men, at Leuthen he had but thirty thousand. His little kingdom could scarcely supply men to fill the places of those who had fallen, while his enemies had teeming populations from which to gather ample materials for fresh armies. It seemed even to his hopeful spirit that all this could have but one ending, and that each success, however great, weakened him more than his adversaries. The winter's rest was, however, most welcome. For the moment there was nothing to plan, nothing to do, save to order, that the drilling of the fresh levies should go on incessantly, in order that some, at least, of the terrible gaps in the army might be filled up before the campaign commenced in the spring.

1758 began badly, for early in January the Russians were

on the move. The empress had dismissed and ordered to be tried by court-martial the general who had done so little the previous year, had appointed Field-marshal Fermor to command in his place, and ordered him to advance instantly and to annex East Prussia in her name.

On the 16th of January he crossed the frontier, and six days later entered Königsberg and issued a proclamation to the effect that his august sovereign had now become mistress of East Prussia, and that all men of official or social position must at once take the oath of allegiance to her.

East Prussia had been devastated the year before by marauders, and its hatred of Russia was intense, but the people were powerless to resist. Some fled, leaving all behind them, but the majority were forced to take the required oath, and for a time East Prussia became a Russian province. Nevertheless its young men constantly slipped away when opportunity offered, to join the Prussian army, and moneys were frequently collected by the impoverished people to despatch to Frederick to aid him in his necessities. A far greater assistance was the English subsidy of £670,000, which was paid punctually for four years, and was of supreme service to him. It was spent thriftily, and of all the enormous sums expended by this country in subsidizing foreign powers, none was ever laid out to a tenth of the advantage of the £2,680,000 given to Frederick.

In the north the campaign also opened early. Ferdinand of Brunswick bestirred himself, defeated the French signally at Krefeld and drove them headlong across the Rhine. Frederick, too, took the field early, and on the 15th of March moved from Breslau upon Schweidnitz. The siege began on the 1st of April, and on the 16th the place surrendered. Four thousand nine hundred prisoners of war were taken, with fifty-one guns and £7,000 in money. Three days later Frederick,

with forty thousand men, was off, deceived Daun as to his intentions, entered Moravia, and besieged Olmütz. Keith was with him again, and Fergus had returned to his staff. The march was conducted with the marvellous precision and accuracy that characterized all Frederick's movements, but Olmütz was a strong place and stoutly defended.

The Prussian engineers, who did not shine at siege work, opened their trenches eight hundred yards too far away. The magazines were too far off, and Daun, who as usual carefully abstained from giving battle, so cut up the convoys, that after five weeks of vain endeavours the king was obliged to raise the siege, partly owing to the loss of the convoy that would have enabled him to take the town, which was now at its last extremity, and partly that he knew that the Russians were marching against Brandenburg. He made a masterly retreat, struck a heavy blow at Daun by capturing and destroying his principal magazine, and then took up a very strong position near Königgrätz.

Here he could have maintained himself against all Daun's assaults, for his position was one that Daun had himself held and strongly fortified, but the news from the north was of so terrible a nature that he was forced to hurry thither. The Cossacks, as the Russian army advanced, were committing most horrible atrocities, burning towns and villages, tossing men and women into the fire, plundering and murdering everywhere, and the very small Prussian force that was watching them was powerless to check the swarming marauders. Frederick, therefore, evading Daun's attempts to arrest his march, crossed the mountains into Silesia again.

At Landshut he gave his army two days' rest, wrote and sent a paper to his brother Prince Henry, who was commander of the army defending Saxony from invasion, telling him that he was on the point of marching against the Russians and might

well be killed, and giving him orders as to the course to be pursued in such an event. He left Keith in command of 40,000 men to hold Daun in check should the latter advance against Silesia, and he again took Fergus with him, finding the young officer's talk a pleasant means of taking his mind off the troubles that beset him.

In nine days the army, which was but fifteen thousand strong, marched from Landshut to Frankfort-on-Oder. Here the king learned that though Küstrin, which the Russians were besieging, still held out, the town had been barbarously destroyed by the enemy. In fierce anger the army pressed forward. The Russian army itself, officers and men, were indignant in the extreme at the brutalities committed by the Cossacks, but were powerless to restrain them, for indeed these ruffians did not hesitate to attack and kill any officer who ventured to interfere between them and their victims. The next morning early Frederick reached the camp of his general Dohna, who had been watching, although unable to interfere with the Russians' proceedings.

The king had a profound contempt for the Russians, in spite of the warning of Keith, who had served with them, that they were far better soldiers than they appeared to be, and he anticipated a very easy victory over them. Early on the 22d of August the army from Frankfort arrived. Dohna's strength was numerically about the same as the king's, and with his thirty thousand men Frederick had no doubt that he would make but short work of the eighty thousand Russians, of whom some twenty-seven thousand were the Cossack rabble, who were not worth being considered in a pitched battle. Deceiving the Russians as to his intentions by opening a heavy cannonade on one of their redoubts, as if intending to ford the river there, he crossed that evening twelve miles lower down, and, after some manœuvring, faced the

Russians, who had at once broken up the siege on hearing of his passage. Fermor sent away his baggage-train to a small village called Kleinkalmin, and planted himself on a moor, where his front was covered by quagmires and the Zaborn stream.

Hearing late at night on the evening of the 24th that Frederick was likely to be upon them the next morning, the Russian general drew out into the open ground north of Zorndorf, which stands on a bare rise surrounded by woods and quagmires, and formed his army into a great square, two miles long by one broad, with his baggage in the middle, a formation which had been found excellent by the Russians in their Turkish wars, but which was by no means well adapted to meet Frederick's methods of impetuous attack. Being ignorant as to the side upon which Frederick was likely to attack, and, having decided to stand on the defensive, he adopted the methods most familiar to him.

Frederick had cut all the bridges across the rivers Warta and Oder, and believed that he should, after defeating the Russians, drive them into the angle formed by the junction of these two streams, and cause them to surrender at discretion.

Unfortunately he had not heard that the great Russian train had been sent to Kleinkalmin; had he done so he could have seized it, and so have possessed himself of the Russian stores and all their munitions of war, and have forced them to surrender without a blow, for the Cossacks had wasted the country far and wide, and deprived it of all resources. But he and his army were so burning with indignation and the desire to avenge the Cossack cruelties, that they made no pause and marched in all haste right round the Russian position, so as to drive them back towards the junction of the two rivers. Fermor's Cossacks brought him in news of Frederick's movements, which were hidden from him by the forests, and,

seeing that he was to be attacked on the Zorndorf side instead of from that on which he had expected it to come, he changed his front and swung round the line containing his best troops to meet it.

On arriving at Zorndorf, Frederick found that the Cossacks had already set the village on fire. This was no disadvantage

to him, for the smoke of the burning houses rolled down towards the Russians, and so prevented them from making observation of the Prussian movements. The king rode up to the edge of the Zaborn hollow, and finding it too deep and boggy to be crossed, determined to attack at the southwest with his left and centre, placing his cavalry in rear and throwing back his right wing. The first division marched forward to the attack by the west end of the flaming village; the next division, which should have been its support, marched by the

east end of Zorndorf; its road was a longer one, and there was consequently a wide gap between the two divisions. Heralded by the fire of two strong batteries—which swept the southwestern corner of the Russian quadrilateral, their cross fire ploughing its ranks with terrible effect—the first division under Manteufel fell upon the enemy.

The fire of the Prussian batteries had sorely shaken the Russians, and had produced lively agitation among the horses of the light baggage-train in the centre of the square, and heralding their advance with a tremendous fire of musketry, the Prussian infantry forced its way into the mass. Had the second division been close at hand, as it should have been, the victory would already have been won; but although also engaged it was not near, and Fermor poured out a torrent of horse and foot upon Manteufel's flank and front. Without support, and surrounded, the Prussians could do nothing, and were swept back, losing twenty-four pieces of cannon, while the Russians with shouts of victory pressed upon them. At this critical moment Seidlitz, with five thousand horse, dashed down upon the disordered mass of Russians, casting it into irretrievable confusion. At the same time the infantry rallied and pressed forward again.

In fifteen minutes the whole Russian army was a confused mass. Fermor, with the Russian horse, fled to Kratsdorf, and had not the bridge there been burnt by Frederick, he would have made off, leaving his infantry to their fate. These should now, according to all rules, have surrendered, but they proved unconquerable save by death. Seidlitz's cavalry sabred them until fatigued by slaughter, the Prussian infantry poured their volleys into them, but they stood immovable and passive, dying where they stood. At one o'clock in the day the battle ceased for a moment. The Prussians had marched at three in the morning, and seeing that although half the Russian army

had been destroyed, the other half had gradually arranged itself into a fresh front of battle, Frederick formed his forces again, and brought up his right wing, for the attack on the side of the Russian quadrilateral which still stood. Forward they went; their batteries well in advance, but before the infantry came within musket-range, the Russian horse and foot rushed forward to the attack, and with such force that they captured one of the batteries, took a whole battalion prisoners, and broke the centre. Here were the regiments of Dohna; perfectly clean and well accoutred, but being less accustomed to war than Frederick's veterans, they gave way at once before the Russian onslaught, and in spite of Frederick's efforts to prevent them, fled from the field and could not be rallied until a mile distant from it. The veterans stood firm, however, until Seidlitz, returning from pursuit, again hurled his horsemen upon the Russian masses, broke them up and drove their cavalry in headlong flight before him.

CHAPTER XII

ANOTHER STEP

THE Russian infantry being involved in the turmoil and confusion caused by the charge of Seidlitz and the defeat of their cavalry, the Prussian infantry again pressed forward, pouring in a heavy fire and charging with the bayonet. Three battalions had been drawn from this very country, and, maddened by the tales they had heard of Cossack cruelty, were not to be denied. The Russians, however, keeping their ranks, filling up the gaps as they were formed, and returning as best

they could the fire of the Prussians, held together with sullen obstinacy.

By this time the ammunition on both sides was exhausted, and now the struggle became hand to hand, bayonet against bayonet, butt-end of musket to butt-end. Seldom has so terrible a struggle ever been witnessed. Nightfall was approaching. Foot by foot the inert Russian mass was pushed backwards. One of their generals, Demikof, collected some two thousand foot and a thousand horse, and took possession of a knoll, and Frederick ordered them to be dispersed again. Forcade was ordered to attack them with two battalions, and General Rutter to bring up the Dohna men again and take them in flank; but the latter had not recovered from their state of demoralization, and at the first cannon-shot turned and ran, continuing their flight even further than before, and taking refuge in the woods. Frederick instantly dismissed Rutter from the service.

Then, as night had completely fallen, the terrible conflict ceased. Fermor by this time, finding that there was no crossing the rivers, had returned. No regiment or battalion of his army remained in order. There was but a confused crowd, which the officers did their best to form into some sort of order regardless of regiment or battalion. The Cossacks scoured the fields under the cover of night, plundering the dead and murdering the wounded, flames marking their path. Four hundred of them were caught at their work by the Prussian hussars, and every one killed. Frederick sent for his tents, and the army pitched its camp facing the Russians; but during the night the latter having got into a sort of order, moved away to the westward and bivouacked on Drewitz Heath, facing the battle-ground.

Fermor had some twenty-eight thousand men still with him, while Frederick had eighteen thousand. The former's loss had

been twenty-one thousand five hundred and twenty-nine killed, wounded, or missing, of whom eight thousand were killed; that of the Prussians was eleven thousand three hundred and ninety, of whom three thousand six hundred and eighty were killed; thus each side lost a third of its number in this terrible struggle. The next morning the Russians got into better order, and drew up in order of battle. A cannonade was for some time kept up on both sides, but the armies were beyond range of artillery. Neither party had any real thoughts of fighting. Fermor, beaten on his own ground the day before, could not dream of attacking the Prussians; the latter were worn out by the fatigues of the previous day. Moreover, on each side the musketry ammunition was used up. The hussars, pursuing the Cossacks, had in the night come upon the Russian waggon-train at Kleim, and carried off a good deal of portable plunder.

The next morning, under cover of a fog, the Russians retreated, reached their baggage, and then moved slowly away; and, harassed by Dohna, sullenly continued their retreat to the Russian frontier. If Frederick could have pressed them he would probably have won another victory, but he had news which called him to hasten away west to join Prince Henry, as his presence there was urgently required for the defence of Saxony.

Fergus had been with the king when the Dohna regiments gave way before the impetuous charge of the Russians, the rest of the staff having been sent away, one after the other, either to bring up Seidlitz or to order a fresh movement among the infantry, and as the king rode down to endeavour to restore order, he followed closely behind him.

The confusion was terrible; the Russian horse, mixed up with the infantry, were sabring and trampling them down. Suddenly three of them dashed at the king. Fergus, setting

spurs to his horse, interposed between them and Frederick. One of the Russians was ridden over, horse and man, by the impetus of his rush, the other two attacked him furiously, and for a moment he was very hard pressed. He kept his horse prancing and curvetting, and managed to keep both his assailants on his right, until at last he cut one down and half a minute later run the other through the body.

"Gallantly done, Major Drummond," the king said, quietly, as wheeling his horse Fergus returned back to take his post behind him. "I shall not forget that you have saved my life." Then without further comment Frederick continued his work, trying to rally the infantry, ordering, entreating, and even laying the cane he always carried across their shoulders.

A minute later there was a thunder of hoofs and Seidlitz burst down upon the Russian mass, changing in a moment the fate of the battle. Excited by the late encounter Fergus's horse took its bit between its teeth, joined Seidlitz's cavalry as they swept past, and, in spite of the efforts of its rider, plunged with him into the midst of the fight. For the next few minutes Fergus had but slight knowledge of what was going on, he being engaged in a series of hand-to-hand fights with both cavalry and infantry. Three times he was wounded, and then the pressure ceased, and he was again galloping across the moors in pursuit of the Russian horse. It was not until Seidlitz's force drew rein that he recovered the control of his horse. Its flank was bleeding from a bayonet gash and a bullet had gone through its neck.

The first wound was of comparatively small consequence, but he feared that the other was serious; but though the horse panted from its exertion and excitement its breath came regularly, and it was evident that the ball had not hit the spine, for had it done so it would have fallen at once. He turned

and rode back with the cavalry, who dismounted a short distance from the scene of action in readiness to take their part again should they be required, while he pursued his way to the spot where the king had stationed himself surrounded by several of his staff. The king glanced at him and then said:

"You are relieved from duty, Major Drummond; let one of the surgeons look at you at once."

Fergus rode but a short distance, and then turning suddenly faint he slid from his horse to the ground. One of the staff happening to look round at once rode back to him. "You had best let me bandage up your wounds roughly," he said. "It will be difficult to find a surgeon now that they are all up to their eyes in work somewhere in the rear."

Fergus had received two severe wounds in the face and a bayonet thrust through his leg. The officer did his best to stanch the bleeding, and was still occupied in doing so when Karl rode up, jumped from his horse, and ran to his master's side.

"Where have you been, Karl?" Fergus asked, for the soldier had also received a severe wound in the head.

"I followed you, master, as in duty bound, but I was some distance behind you, and in that mêlée I could not get near you; and being mixed up with one of the squadrons, I did not see you as you came back, and was in a great state about you until, on riding up to the staff, one of the officers pointed you out to me."

"I think that you are in good hands now," the officer said. "I will join the king again." Fergus thanked him warmly, but in a weak voice.

"The first thing, master, is for you to get a drink," Karl said, and he took from the holster of Fergus's saddle a flask that he had placed there that morning. "Take a good drink

of this," he said, "then I will see to your wounds. It is plain enough to see that that officer knew nothing about them."

Fergus drank half of the contents of the flask and then handed it to Karl. "You finish it up," he said; "you want it as much as I do."

"Not so much, master, but I want it badly enough I own."

Having drank, he proceeded to rebandage his master's wounds, first laying on them rolls of lint he took from his own saddle-bag. "I never go on a campaign without lint and a bandage or two," he said. "Many a life has been lost that might easily enough have been saved had they been at hand." He laid the lint on the wounds and then bound them firmly and evenly. He had a bandage left when he had finished this. With the aid of a man who was limping to the rear, he used it for stanching his own wounds.

"Well, master," he said, "you cannot do better than lie here for the present. I will look after the horses and fasten them up to that bush. The battle is going on as fiercely as ever, and looks as if it would go on until dark. If so, there will be no collecting the wounded to-night; but as soon as I see where the king bivouacs I will get you there somehow."

"I shall do very well here—at any rate for the present, Karl. In the meantime it would be a good thing if you would take the two horses down to the brook and give them a good drink. You mayn't get a chance later on. As my horse Turk is wounded in two places, I have no doubt the poor beast is as thirsty as I am."

"The bayonet wound is of no consequence," Karl said, after examining the horse's flanks, "except that it has taken a good bit off its value. I don't think this bullet wound through the neck is serious either."

In an hour Karl returned leading the horses. "I feel all the better for a wash, Captain; I wish you could have one too.

I have filled my water-bottle, but you will want that before morning."

By means of the valises and cloaks Fergus was propped up into a half-sitting position, and he remained where he was until, after nightfall, the din of battle ceased. He had eaten a few mouthfuls of bread and felt stronger, and by the time the tents were pitched and the bivouac fires lighted he was able to stand. With Karl's assistance he mounted in side-saddle fashion, and, Karl leading the horses, made for the tents of the king's staff, five hundred yards away. Captain Diedrich, the officer who shared the tent with Fergus, helped Karl to lift him down and carry him in.

"Do you want a surgeon to see you?"

"No, they must have thousands of serious cases on hand. I merely fainted from loss of blood; the two wounds in my head cannot be very serious, and Karl has bandaged them up as well as a surgeon could do. The worst wound is in my leg, the bayonet went right through it and for a moment pinned it to the saddle. However, it is but a flesh wound, behind the bone, about six inches below the knee. It bled very freely at first, but Karl stanched it, and it has not burst out since, so it is evident that no great harm is done."

"I will bring you in some wine and water now," Diedrich said. "They are getting supper and I will send you a bowl of soup as soon as it is ready."

After Karl had tethered the horses, that of Fergus with the others belonging to the staff, and his own with those of the escort and staff orderlies, he sat down at one of the fires, ate his supper—for each man carried three days' provisions in his haversack—and chatting with his comrades, heard that several of the orderlies had been killed in the fight, and that four of the officers of the royal staff had also fallen under the enemy's fire as they carried messages through the storm of case-shot

and bullets. All agreed that never had they seen so terrible a fight, and that well-nigh a third, if not more, of the army had been killed or wounded.

"We made a mistake about these Russians," one of the troopers said. "They are dirty, and they don't even look like soldiers, but I never saw such obstinate beggars to fight. From the moment the cavalry made their first charge they were beaten and ought to have given in, but they seemed to know nothing about it, and that second line of theirs charged as if it was but the beginning of a battle. I was never so surprised in my life as when they poured down on us, horse and foot; but all that was nothing to the way they stood afterwards. If they had been bags of saw-dust they could not have been more indifferent to our fire. That was a bad business of Dohna's men. I thought when we joined them they looked too spick and span to be any good; but that they should run almost as fast and far as the men of the Federal army at Rossbach is shameful. Neither in the last war nor in this has a Prussian soldier so disgraced himself. I don't envy them. I don't suppose a man in the army will speak to them, and we may be sure that it will be a long time indeed before our Fritz gets over it. It will need some hard fighting and something desperate in the way of bravery before he forgives them. "How is your master, Karl?"

"He will do. He has got three wounds and lost a lot of blood, but in a fortnight he will be in the saddle again, perhaps less, for he is as hard as steel."

"He saved the king's life, Karl. I was twenty yards away, and was wedged in so that there was no moving except backwards, for Dohna's men were half mad with fright, and the Russians were cutting and slashing in the middle of us."

"I saw it," Karl said; "I was close to you at the time. I put spurs to my horse and rode over three or four of our own

men, and cut down one who grasped my reins, but I got there too late. I had no great fear of the result, though. Why, you know, he killed six Pomeranians who were looting Count Eulenfurst's place close to Dresden, and he made short work of those three Russians. It was beautifully done, too. They tried to get one on each side of him, but he kept them on his right, and that made a safe thing of it. He is a quiet, good-tempered officer. There is as much fun about him as a boy, but when his spirit is up there are not many swordsmen in the army that could match him. Why, when he first joined, nearly three years ago, he was in the 3d Royal Dragoons, my own regiment, and I heard the sergeant, who was in the fencing-room, say that there was not an officer in the regiment who was a match for him with the sword. Now I have finished my pipe, and must be going to look after him again."

The king's surgeon examined Fergus's wounds the next morning and said that, although he would not be able to sit a horse until his leg had healed, he would otherwise soon be convalescent. Soon after he had left him, Sir John Mitchell came in to see him. As the English ambassador had very often during the last two winters met Fergus in the king's apartments, at which he himself was a regular visitor, they were by this time well known to each other; Mitchell indeed regarded Fergus as a valuable assistant in his work of interesting Frederick and turning his mind from his many troubles and anxieties.

"The surgeon has just given a good account of you to the king, Drummond," he said, "and his Majesty expressed much satisfaction at hearing that your wounds are not serious. 'That youth is not like most of your compatriots, Mitchell,' he said to me, with a smile; 'ever ready to fight, but equally ready to join in a drinking bout should opportunity offer. He is always on horseback, and as hardy and as healthy as

can be. With one of the hard-drinking sort fever might set in, but there is no risk of it with him. As I told you, he saved my life yesterday. I was nearly compelled to take to my sword, but that would have been of little avail against the three Russians. Save for the sake of Prussia, my life is of no great value to me, for 'tis one full of care and trouble, but for my country's sake I would fain hold on to it as long as there is hope for her deliverance from her enemies.

"'You can congratulate him on his promotion, Mitchell, for I made him a major on the spot. It was a brilliant feat, as brilliant as that which he performed at Lobositz, or that at Count Eulenfurst's house at Dresden, each of which got him a step. 'Tis not often that an officer gets thrice promoted for distinguished bravery. Each time the feat was the talk of the whole army, and it will not be less so at the present time, methinks, nor will any feel jealous at his rapid rise.'"

"The king is too kind, your Excellency."

"I do not think so, Drummond. I have marked you a good deal during the last two years, and you have borne yourself well, and as a Scotchman I am proud of you. You have the knack of your kinsman Keith of entering into the king's humours, of being a bright companion when he is in a good temper and of holding your tongue when he is put out, of expressing your opinion frankly and yet never familiarly; and your freshness and hopefulness often, I see, cheer the king, whose Prussians cannot for their lives help being stiff and formal, or get to talk with him as if he were a human being like themselves. Next to Keith and myself, I think that there is no one with whom the king can distract his mind so completely as with you. To him it is like getting a whiff of the fresh air from our Scottish hills. He told the surgeon to see that you were sent down with the first batch of wounded officers."

The next day, accordingly, while the two armies were watching each other, and the cannon were growling, Fergus was taken down to Frankfort.

Zorndorf was fought on the 25th of August; and on the 2d of September Frederick started with the army for Saxony, where Prince Maurice had been sorely pressed by Daun and the newly raised army of the Confederates, and had had to take post on some heights a short distance from Dresden.

"A bad job, Major," Karl grumbled, as he brought the news to Fergus, who was quartered in a private house. "The king has gone to have a slap at Daun, and here are we left behind. If he would have waited another fortnight we might have been with him."

"Perhaps we shall get there in time yet, Karl. You may be sure that as soon as Daun hears that the king is coming he will, as usual, begin to fortify himself, and it will need no small amount of marching and counter-marching to get him to come out and give battle. He was slow and cautious before, but after Leuthen he is likely to be doubly so. However, I will get a tailor here to-day to measure me for a new uniform. What with blood, and your cutting my breeches to get at my leg, I must certainly get a new outfit before I rejoin. I hope I shall be with the marshal again. It is a good deal more lively with him than it is with the king's staff, who, although no doubt excellent soldiers, are certainly not lively companions. I do hope there will be no great battle until we get there. I should think I might start in a week."

The surgeon, however, would not hear of this, and it was the end of the third week in September before Fergus rode from Frankfort. The news from the south was so far satisfactory that he had fidgeted less than he would otherwise have done. Daun had, in fact, retired hastily from Meissen, and

had taken post in an almost impregnable position at Stolpen. Neisse was being besieged and must be relieved, but Daun now blocked Frederick's way at Stolpen, both to that town and to Bautzen—cut him off indeed from Silesia, and for the moment the royal army and that of Prince Maurice were lying at Dresden. Fergus, therefore, was content to follow the doctor's orders and to spend four days on the journey down to Dresden. Keith was there and received him joyfully; Lindsay greeted him vociferously.

"So you have gone up another step above me," he laughed. "Never was a fellow with such luck as you have. Saved the king's life, I hear; tumbled over scores of Russians; won the victory with your own sword."

"Not quite as much as that, Lindsay," Fergus laughed. "The scores of Cossacks come down to three, one of whom my horse tumbled over, and I managed the other two. Still, although the battle was only half finished when I was put out of all further part in it, I may be said in one way to have won it, for had the king fallen, there is no saying how matters might have gone. It is true that we could not have lost it, for the Russians were past taking the offensive, but it might have been a drawn battle."

"It was a terrible business," Lindsay said, seriously; "as bad in its way as Prague, that is to say, in proportion to the numbers engaged. Everyone says they would rather fight three Austrians than one Russian. The marshal has rather scored off the king, for he warned him that though slow the Russians were formidable foes, but the king scoffed at the idea. He has found out now that he greatly undervalued them, and has owned as much to Keith. I am sorry to say the marshal is not well. He suffers a good deal, and I fancy that after this campaign is over he will ask to be relieved from active duty in the field and will take the com-

mand of the army covering Dresden. He has led a hard life, you see, and has done as much as three ordinary men. Still, we shall see how he is next spring. It would almost break his heart to have to give up before this war is over."

"It is difficult to say when that will be, Lindsay. Here we are getting towards the third year, and the war is not one whit nearer to the end than it was when we left Berlin. It is true that we have no longer to count France as formidable, but Russia has turned out far more so than we expected; and having once taken the matter up, the empress, if she is half as obstinate as her soldiers, is likely to go on at it for a long time. And we are using up our army very fast, and cannot replace our losses as Austria and Russia can do."

"I hope they are not going to make another twenty years' war of it," Lindsay said. "If you go on in the way that you are doing, Drummond, you will be a field-marshal in a third of that time; but you must remember about the proverb of the pitcher and the well."

"Yes, Lindsay, but you must remember that I am having a share of hard knocks. I have been wounded twice now, to say nothing of being stunned and taken prisoner; so you see I am having my share of bad luck as well as good. Now at present you have never had as much as a scratch, and when your bad luck comes it may come all in a lump."

"There is something in that, Fergus, though I own that I had not thought of it. Well, perhaps it is better to take it in small doses than have it come all at once. So you have brought your man back safe, I see, though he has had an ugly slash across the cheek. By the way, I hope that those two sword-cuts are not going to leave bad scars, Drummond. It would be hard to have your beauty spoilt for life and you only nineteen, though, fortunately, everyone thinks you two or three years older. However, they will be honourable scars, and

women don't mind any disfigurement in a man if it is got in battle. It is a pity, though, that you did not get them when defending the king's life instead of in the cavalry charge afterwards. You brought your horse safe out of the battle, I hope?"

"He has, like myself, honourable scars, Lindsay. He got an ugly gash on the flank with a bayonet, and I am afraid when it heals white hair will grow on it. He had also a bullet through the neck; fortunately it missed both spine and windpipe, and is quite healed up now."

"It is really a pity to take such a horse as that under fire," Lindsay said, regretfully.

"Well, when one risks one's own life, one ought not to mind risking that of a horse, however valuable."

"No, I suppose not. Still, it is a pity to ride so valuable an animal. You are paid so much for risking your own life, you see, Drummond, but it is no part of the bargain that you should risk that of a horse worth any amount of money."

Fergus, on his arrival, called at once on Count Eulenfurst, who, with his wife and daughter, were delighted to see him, for he had now been absent from Dresden since Frederick had marched against Soubise thirteen months before.

"We heard from Captain Lindsay," the count said, "when the army arrived here some three weeks since, that you were wounded, but not gravely; also, that for valour shown in defending the king when he was attacked by three Russians, you had been promoted to the rank of major, upon which we congratulate you heartily. And now that you have come, I suppose your king will soon be dashing away with you again. What a man he is, and what soldiers! I can assure you that sometimes when I read the bulletins I am inclined to regret that I was not born two days' journey farther north. And yet, in spite of his fierce blows at all these enemies, there is

no sign of peace being any nearer than when you dropped down to our rescue some twenty-seven months ago. 'Tis a terrible war."

"It is, indeed, Count. Certainly, when I crossed the seas to take service here, I little thought how terrible was the struggle that was approaching. If we had known it, I am sure that my mother would never have let me leave home."

"She must be terribly uneasy about you," the countess said. "Do you hear from her often?"

"She writes once a month, and so do I. I get her letters in batches. I know that she must be very anxious, but she says nothing about it in her letters. She declares that she is proud that I am fighting for a Protestant prince so hemmed in by his enemies, and that the thoughts and hopes of all England are with him, and the bells ring as loudly at our victories through England and Scotland as they do at Berlin."

"If we of Saxony had understood the matter sooner," the count said, "we should be surely fighting now on your side; and, indeed, had not Frederick compelled his Saxon prisoners to serve with him, had he sent them all to their homes, there would have been no animosity, and, as Protestants, the people would soon have come to see that your cause was their own. Most of them do see it now, for whenever the enemy have entered Saxony they have plundered and ill-treated the people, especially the Protestants. Are your horses still alive?"

"Yes, Count, and well, save that one was wounded at Zorndorf; but for that he cannot blame me, for it was his own doing. When Seidlitz charged into the midst of the Russians he passed close to us, and Turk, maddened by excitement, seized the bit in his teeth and joined him in the mêlée. I got three wounds and he had two, but happily he has been cured as rapidly as I have, though with no advantage to the appearance of either of us."

"Will the scars on your face always show as they do now?" Thirza asked.

"I am sure I hope not," he said. "At present they are barely healed, but in time, no doubt, the redness will fade out and they will not show greatly, though I daresay the scars will be always visible."

"I should be proud of them, Major Drummond," said Thirza, "considering that you got them in so great a battle, and one in which you rendered such service to the king."

"You see, I shall not be always able to explain when and how I got them," Fergus laughed. "People who do not know me will say, 'There goes a young student who has got his face slashed at the university.'"

"They could not say that," she said, indignantly. "Even if you were not in uniform, anyone can see that you are a soldier."

"Whether or not, Countess Thirza, it is a matter that will certainly trouble me very little. However, I begin to think that I shall not always be a soldier. Certainly, I should not leave the army as long as this war goes on; but I have seen such terrible fighting, such tremendous carnage, that I think that at the end of it, if I come out at the end, I shall be glad to take to a peaceful life. My cousin, Marshal Keith, has been fighting all his life; he is a great soldier, and has the honour of being regarded by the king as his friend, but he has no home, no peace and quiet, no children growing up to take his place. I should not like to look forward to such a life, and would rather go back and pass my days in the Scottish glens where I was brought up."

"I think that you are right," the count said, seriously. "In ordinary times a soldier's life would be a pleasant one, and he could reckon upon the occasional excitement of war, but such a war as this is beyond all calculation. In these

three campaigns, and the present one is not ended, nigh half of the army which marched through here has been killed or wounded. It is terrible to think of. One talks of the chances of war, but this is making death almost a certainty, for if the war continues another two or three years how few will be left of those who began it. Even now a great battle will probably be fought in a few days. Two great armies are within as many marches of Dresden. The smallest of them outnumbers Frederick, the other is fully twice his strength, and so intrenched, as I hear, that the position is well-nigh impregnable."

"I expect the king will find means to force him out of it without fighting," Fergus said, with a smile. "Daun is altogether over-cautious, and Leuthen is not likely to have rendered him more confident."

Fergus spent the greater part of his time at the count's, for Marshal Keith insisted upon his abstaining from all duty until the march began.

"We are off to-morrow morning," he said, when he went up on the evening of the 30th of September—"where I know not; except the king, Marshal Keith, and Prince Maurice, I do not suppose that anyone knows; but, wherever it is, we start at daybreak."

"May you return erelong safe and sound," the count said. "Is there nothing that we can do for you? You know we regard you as one of the family, and there is nothing that would give us greater pleasure than to be able in some way to make you comfortable."

"I thank you heartily, Count, but I need nothing; and if I did I could purchase it, for it is but seldom that one has to put one's hand in one's pocket, and as a captain I have saved the greater part of my pay for the last two years, and shall pile up my hoard still faster now that I am a major. I have

never had an opportunity before of thanking you for that purse which you handed to Karl to be laid out for my benefit in case of need. He holds it still, and I have never had occasion to draw upon it, and hope that I never may have to do so."

The next morning the army, furnished with nine days' provisions, and leaving a force to face the army of the Confederates, strode along the road at its usual pace. They took the road for Bautzen, drove off Loudon, who commanded Daun's northern outposts, without difficulty, and so passed his flank. The advanced guard pushed on to Bautzen, drove away the small force there, and leaving there the magazines of the army, occupied Hochkirch, a few miles away. The king with the main body arrived at Bautzen on the following day, and halted there to see what Daun was going to do. The latter was, in fact, obliged to abandon his stronghold, for the Prussians at Hochkirch menaced the road by which he drew his provisions from his magazines at Zittau. Marching at night, he reached and occupied a line of hills between Hochkirch and Zittau, and within a couple of miles of the former place.

Frederick had been forced to wait at Bautzen till another convoy of provisions arrived. When he joined the division at Hochkirch and saw Daun's army on the opposite hills, busy as usual in intrenching itself, he ordered the army to encamp when they were within a mile of Daun's position.

Marwitz, the staff officer to whom he gave the order, argued and remonstrated, and at length refused to be concerned in the marking out of such an encampment. He was at once put under arrest and another officer did the work. Frederick, in fact, entertained a sovereign contempt for Daun, with his slow marches, his perpetual intrenchings, and his obstinate caution, and had no belief whatever that the Austrian marshal would

attempt to attack him. He was in a very bad humour, too, having discovered that Retzow had failed to take possession of the Stromberg, a detached hill which would have rendered the position a safe one. He put him under arrest and ordered the Stromberg to be occupied. The next morning the force proceeding to do so found, however, that the post was already occupied by Austrians, who resisted stoutly, and being largely reinforced, maintained their position on the hill, on which several batteries were placed.

It was now Tuesday, and Frederick determined to march away on the Saturday. His obstinacy had placed the army in an altogether untenable and dangerous position. All his officers were extremely uneasy, and Keith declared to the king that the Austrians deserved to be hanged if they did not attack; to which Frederick replied:

"We must hope that they are more afraid of us than even of the gallows."

CHAPTER XIII

HOCHKIRCH

THE village of Hochkirch stood on a hilltop, with an extensive view for miles round on all sides save on the south, where hills rose one above another. Among these hills was one called the Devil's Hill, where the primitive country people believed that the devil and his witches held high festival once a year. Frederick's right wing, which was commanded by Keith, lay in Hochkirch. Beyond the village he had four battalions, and a battery of twenty guns on the next height to Hochkirch. From this point to the Devil's Hill

extended a thick wood, in which a strong body of Croats were lurking. Frederick, with the centre, extended four miles to the left of Hochkirch. Retzow, who had been restored to his command, had ten or twelve thousand men lying in or behind Weissenberg, four miles away.

Frederick's force, with that of Keith, amounted to twenty-eight thousand men, and Retzow's command was too far away to be considered as available. Daun's force, lying within a mile of Hochkirch, amounted to ninety thousand men. Well might Keith say that the Austrians deserved to be hanged if they did not attack. Frederick himself was somewhat uneasy, and would have moved away on the Friday night had he not been waiting for the arrival of a convoy of provisions from Bautzen. Still he relied upon Daun's inactivity. This time, however, his reliance was falsified. All Daun's generals were of opinion that it would be disgraceful were they to stand on the defensive against an army practically less than a third of their force, and their expostulations at length roused Daun into activity.

Once decided, his dispositions were, as usual, excellent. His plan was an able one. He himself, with thirty thousand men, was to start as soon as it was dark on Friday evening, sweep round to the south, follow the base of the Devil's Mountain, and then through the hollows and thick wood till he was close to the force on the right of Hochkirch, and was to fall suddenly on them at five o'clock on Saturday morning. The orders were that as soon as Hochkirch was taken, the rest of the army, sixty thousand strong, were to march against Frederick, both in front and on his left, and so completely smash and crumple him up. Frederick had no premonition of the storm that was gathering. On Thursday and Friday the Austrians were engaged as usual in felling trees, forming abattis, throwing up earth-works, and in all ways strengthen-

ing their position. Everything seemed to show that Daun was still bent upon standing upon the defensive only. As the lurking Croats and Pandoors had every night crept up through the brushwood and hollows, and skirmished with the Prussian outposts away on the right, scattered firing was not heeded much in Hochkirch. Fergus had just got up in the little room he shared with Lindsay in the marshal's quarters, a mile north of Hochkirch, and was putting on his boots, when, a few minutes past five, the sound of firing was heard.

"There are the Croats as usual," he said.

"What a restless fellow you are, Drummond! you have been up at this unearthly hour each morning since we got here. It won't be light for another two hours yet; I doubt whether it will be light then. It looks to me as if it were a thick fog."

"You are right about my early hours, and I admit I have been restless. It is not a pleasant idea that but a mile away there is an army big enough to eat us up, and nothing whatever to prevent their pouncing upon us at any moment except

two or three batteries. The marshal was saying last night he should regard it as the most fortunate escape he ever had if we drew off safely to-night without being attacked. That firing is heavier than usual. There go a couple of guns!"

"Those two advanced pieces are sending a round or two of case-shot into the bushes, I suppose," Lindsay said, drowsily.

Fergus completed his dressing and went downstairs and out into the night. Here he could hear much better than in the room above, which had but one loophole for air and light, and that was almost stopped up with a wisp of straw. He could now plainly hear volley firing and a continued crackle of musketry. He ran upstairs again.

"You had better get your things on at once, Lindsay, it is a more serious affair than usual. I shall take it upon myself to wake the marshal."

He went to Keith's door, knocked, and opened it.

"Who is there? What is it?" the marshal asked.

"It is I, Drummond, sir. There is heavy firing going on to the right, much heavier than it has been any other night."

"What o'clock is it?"

"About ten minutes past five, sir. There is a thick mist and it is pitch dark. Shall I go over and inquire what is going on?"

"Yes, do. I expect that those rascally Croats have been reinforced, and are trying to find out whether we are still in our position."

"I will be back as soon as I can, sir."

Fergus ran round to the low range of sheds in which their horses were stabled.

"Karl, are you there?" he shouted.

"Yes, Major," a voice said close at hand. "I am listening to all that firing."

"Saddle up at once; you may as well ride with me. I am going to see what it is all about."

A lantern was burning in the shed, and by its light Fergus and the orderly rapidly saddled the horses.

"You had better light two more lanterns, Karl. Leave the one on the wall burning. We will take the others; we shall want them, for one cannot see a horse's length away, and if we had not the sound of firing to guide us we should soon lose our way altogether."

The light enabled them to go at a fairly fast trot, but they trusted rather to their horses than to their own eyes. The roar and rattle of the firing increased in volume every minute.

"That is more than an affair with the Croats, Karl."

"A good deal more, Major. It looks as if the Austrians were beating up our quarters in earnest."

"It does, indeed."

When they reached Hochkirch they found the troops there astir. The cavalry trumpets were sounding to horse, and the clamour round the village told that the troops encamped there were getting under arms.

"Do you know what is going on to the right, sir?" Fergus asked a field-officer who was in the act of mounting. "Marshal Keith has sent me to inquire."

"Not in the least; but, as far as I can tell by the sound, they must be attacking us in force, and they seem to be working round in rear of our battery there. The sound is certainly coming this way."

"Then I will go on to the battery," Fergus said. He had ridden but a little way farther, when he was convinced that the officer was right. The crash of musketry volleys rose continuously, but although the boom of guns was mingled with it, there was nothing like the continuous fire that might

have been expected from a twenty-gun battery. Suddenly from his right a crackle of firing broke out, and then heavy volleys; the bullets sung overhead.

"They are attacking us in the rear, sir, sure enough," Karl said.

"I am afraid they have captured our big battery, Karl," Fergus said, as he turned his horse.

It was but a few hundred yards back to the village, but just as he reached it a roar of fire broke out from its rear. They could make their way but slowly along the streets, so crowded were they now with infantry, who, unable to see until a yard or two away, could not make room for them to pass, as they would otherwise have done for a staff-officer.

With feverish impatience Fergus pushed on until the road was clear; but even now he had to go comparatively slowly, for unless they kept to the track across the open ground that led to the farmhouse, they must miss it altogether. Lights were moving about there as he rode up. Keith himself was at the door, and the orderlies were bringing up the horses.

"What is it, Major Drummond?"

"It is an attack in force, sir, on the right flank and rear. The enemy have crept up between Hochkirch and our battery, and as I came through the village they were attacking it in rear. I cannot say for certain, but I believe that the battery is taken, though there is a heavy infantry fire still going on there."

"Ride to Ziethen, Captain Lindsay, give him the news, and tell him to fall upon the Austrians. Captain Cosser and Captain Gaudy, ride off to the infantry and bring them up at the double. I will take on the Kannaker battalion myself;" and he rode down at once to the camp of this battalion, which was but a hundred yards away, despatching others of his staff to hasten up the regiments near. The Kannaker battalion

was already under arms and marched off with him as soon as he arrived.

"I am going to the left of the village, Fergus, and shall make for the battery, which we must retake. Do you go first into Hochkirch and see how matters go there; if badly, give my order to the colonel of the first battalion that comes along, and tell him to throw himself into the village and assist to hold it to the last. After that you must be guided by circumstances, it is doubtful if you will ever find me again in this black mist."

Fergus handed his lantern to Keith's orderly, who took his place at the side of the marshal as the regiment went off at the double. Fergus rode up to the village. It was scarce twenty minutes since he had left it, but it was evident that a furious fight was raging there, and that the Austrians had already penetrated some distance into its streets. Without hesitation he turned and rode back again, and in a few minutes met a dark body of men coming along at a rapid run.

"Where is the colonel?" he asked, reining in his horse suddenly, for he had nearly ridden into the midst of them.

"Just ahead of us, to the right, sir."

In a minute Fergus was beside him. By the light that Karl carried he recognized him.

"Major Lange," he said, "I have the marshal's orders that you should march into Hochkirch and hold it to the last. The Austrians are already in partial possession of it."

"Which way is it, Major Drummond? for in this mist I have almost lost my direction, and there seems to be firing going on everywhere ahead."

"I will direct you," Fergus said. "I have just come from there;" and he trotted back to the village. As they approached Hochkirch, it was evident that although the defenders were still clinging to its outskirts, the greater portion was

lost; but with a cheer the battalion rushed forward, and was in a moment fiercely engaged. Major Lange's horse fell dead under him, struck by an Austrian bullet. Fergus rode into the first house he came to, dismounted, and left his horse there.

"You may as well leave yours here too, Karl. We can do no good with them and should only be in the way. When it begins to get light we will try and find the marshal. You may as well get hold of the first musket and ammunition-pouch that you can pick up. There will be enough for every man to do to hold this place until more reinforcements come up."

A desperate struggle went on in the streets. The Prussians who had been driven back joined the battalion just arrived. Bayonets and the butt-end of the musket were used rather than shot, for in the mist friend could not be distinguished from foe five yards away, and it was from their shouts rather than by their uniforms that men knew whether they had one or other in front of them. Karl was not long in finding arms, and taking his place in the ranks was soon at work with the others. The village was almost circular in shape, clustered as it were on the top of the hill. The struggle was not confined to one street, but raged in half a dozen, more or less parallel with each other. Gradually the Prussians pressed forward, and had more than half cleared the village when their advance was checked by the arrival of fresh battalions of the Austrians; then Lange threw his men into the church and churchyard and there stubbornly maintained himself.

Soon flames burst out from various directions, giving a welcome light to the defenders, and enabling them to keep up so heavy a fire upon the now swarming enemy that they repulsed each attack made upon them. Eight battalions of Austrians in vain tried to capture the position, attacking it on every

side, but the stubborn Prussians held firmly to it. Meanwhile beyond, as far as the battery, the fight raged. The Plothow battalion, which had been stationed in advance of it, had been attacked and enveloped on all sides by the Austrians, but had defended themselves splendidly; and though forced back by sheer weight of numbers, had maintained their order and done heavy execution by their fire. The battery had been lost, but those who had been driven out rallied, and with the Plothow men made so furious a rush forward that they hurled the Austrians out again. It was but for a few minutes, for such masses of the enemy poured up through the mist that there was no withstanding them, and many of the Prussians were taken prisoners.

Their captivity was of short duration, for through the mist Ziethen's horse burst out suddenly into the raging tumult, scattered the Austrians, released the prisoners, and were then off to fall upon fresh enemies, as soon as they discovered their position. Everywhere isolated combats took place; battalion after battalion, and squadron after squadron, as it arrived, flung itself upon the first enemy it came upon in the darkness. Keith, on reaching the battery, again retook it, but again the Austrian masses obtained possession. In and around Hockkirch similar desperate struggles were going on. None fled, but falling back until meeting another battalion hastening up, re-formed and charged again. Ziethen's horse, together with the rest of the cavalry and gendarmes, mingled with staff-officers and others who had lost their way, continued to make furious charges against the Austrians pressing round the rear of the position, and holding them in check.

Until its cartridges were all spent, Lange's battalion held the churchyard, though its numbers were terribly lessened by the Austrian fire. Then the major called upon his men to form in a mass and cut their way through the enemy with the

bayonet. This they most gallantly did, losing many, but the remnant emerged from the village, their gallant leader, wounded to death, among them. Fergus and Karl separated themselves from them, ran to the house where they had left their horses, mounted, and galloped off. By this time the centre was coming up, led by the king himself. As they neared Hochkirch a cannon-ball took off the head of Frank of Brunswick, the king's youngest brother-in-law; Prince Maurice of Dessau, riding in the dark till within twenty yards of the Austrians, was badly hit, and the storm of case and musket bullets that swept the approaches to Hochkirch was so terrible that Frederick's battalion had to fall back.

"The first thing is to find the marshal," Fergus said, as he rode out of Hochkirch. "He must be somewhere to the right."

He galloped on until a flash of fire burst out a few yards in front. His horse fell dead under him, and before he could extricate himself from it he was surrounded by Austrians. An officer shouted to him to surrender, and, seeing the hopelessness of resistance, he at once did so. He looked round, and to his satisfaction saw nothing of Karl. He was placed in the midst of the Austrian regiment under the charge of a sergeant, and told that he would be shot if he tried to escape.

Frederick, with more battalions, that had come up, pushed on, thrusting the Austrians back until he had left Hochkirch on his left. But by this time it was past eight o'clock, the fog was dispersing, and he saw a great body of Austrians on the heights to his right, from Waditz to Meschduitz, as well as on the whole line of heights on the left. His only line of retreat, therefore, was along at the foot of the Dressau heights; these he ordered to be seized at once. This was done before the Austrians could reach the spot, they being hindered by furious charges by Ziethen from the open ground between

"BEFORE HE COULD EXTRICATE HIMSELF FERGUS WAS SURROUNDED BY AUSTRIANS"

Kumschutz and Canitz, and Frederick rearranged his front of battle and waited for Retzow to come up with the left wing.

The Austrians tried several attacks, but with little success. They too had been hindered and confused by the mist, and the force that had been engaged in and round Hochkirch had suffered terribly, and they pushed forward but feebly, now that the Prussian guns on the heights were able to open fire upon them. Retzow was long in coming, for he too had been attacked by twenty thousand men, who had been told off by Daun for the purpose. The attack, however, was badly managed and feeble, but it delayed Retzow from making a start when Frederick's urgent messages reached him. During this anxious delay the Austrians captured Frederick's main battery of thirty guns north of Rodewitz, and were beginning to press forward when Retzow came on to the ground and took up a position at Belgern, covering Frederick's left flank.

Had he been an hour sooner he might have saved the heavy battery which lay beyond the range of the guns on the Dressau heights, and which Frederick could not have supported without bringing on a general battle. Then in a steady and leisurely manner the king drew off his forces and took up a new position from Krewitz to Puswietz, carrying off the whole of his baggage, Retzow and the troops on the Dressau heights covering the movement until all had passed, Daun and his great army standing on their circle of hills watching, but not interfering with the movement.

Frederick's rashness had cost him dear. He had lost eight thousand men, five thousand three hundred and eighty-one of them and a hundred and nineteen officers, killed or prisoners, the rest wounded; he had also lost a hundred and one guns, and most of his tents. Of the Austrians three hundred and twenty-five officers and five thousand six hundred and fourteen

rank and file were killed or wounded, and a thousand prisoners lost. Twenty thousand of their men deserted during their passage through the dark and intricate woods.

Fergus remained with the regiment that had captured him until the battle ceased, after which he was taken under a guard to the spot where the Prussian prisoners were gathered. Of these there were fifty-eight officers, the greater part of whom were more or less severely wounded. Two of the officers belonged to the Kannaker battalion, and from them Fergus asked for news of Marshal Keith.

"We fear he is killed," one said. "He led us into the battery, and he was with us after we were driven out again, but after that neither of us saw him. Everything was in confusion, we could not see twenty yards any way. We know that the battalion had suffered terribly. Just before we were captured, being with a score of men cut off from the rest by a rush of Austrians, a rumour spread that the marshal had been killed, but more than this we cannot tell."

Two hours later an Austrian officer rode up with orders that the prisoners were to be marched some distance farther to the rear. Fergus went up to him and said:

"Can you tell me, sir, if Marshal Keith is among the killed? I am one of his aides-de-camp, and moreover a cousin of his."

"Yes," the officer said, "he has fallen. His body was recognized by General Lacy, who commands here; I am on his staff. The general was greatly affected, for he and the marshal were at one time comrades in arms. The marshal was shot through the heart and had previously received two other wounds. He was a most gallant soldier, and one highly esteemed by us. He will be buried with all military honours at Hochkirch, where he has been carried."

Fergus was deeply moved. Keith had been so uniformly

kind that he had come to feel for him almost as a father. He could not speak for a minute, and then said:

"Would you ask General Lacy, sir, to allow me to attend his funeral, both as one of the marshal's staff and as a relation, who loved him very dearly? My name is Major Drummond."

"I will certainly ask him, sir, and have no doubt that he will grant the request." He thereupon gave orders that a young officer should remain with Fergus until an answer was received. He then rode off, and in a few minutes the rest of the prisoners were marched away. In half an hour the officer returned.

"General Lacy will be glad if you will accompany me to his quarters; he gladly accedes to your request."

Lacy occupied one of the houses at Hochkirch which had been spared by the flames. The aide-de-camp conducted Fergus to an empty room.

"The general is away at present," he said, "but will see you as soon as he returns." When alone Fergus burst into tears. It was indeed a heavy loss to him. Even before he came out he had come to regard Keith with deep respect and admiration; he had heard so much of him from his mother, that it seemed to him that their relationship was far closer than it really was, and that Keith stood in the position of an uncle rather than of his mother's cousin. Since he had been in Germany he had been constantly with him, save when he was away with the king, and the genial kindness, the absence of all formality, and the affectionate interest he had shown in him, had been almost of a fatherly nature.

It was but a poor consolation to know that it was the death Keith would of all others have chosen, and that had he survived the campaign, he would probably have been obliged to retire from active service, or to take some quiet command where his inactivity would speedily have chafed him beyond

bearing, after so active and stirring a life. Two hours later the officer entered the room, and said that General Lacy had returned and would see him. The general was alone when he was shown into his room, and his face evinced a momentary surprise when his eyes fell on Fergus. Promotion was not very rapid in the Prussian army, and he had expected to see a man of between thirty and forty. The sight of this young officer with the rank and insignia of major, and wearing on his breast the Prussian order, surprised him.

"I am sorry indeed for your loss, Major Drummond," he said in English—"sorry for my own, too; though it may well be that in any case Keith and I should never have met again. But we were comrades once, and like everyone else I loved him. What relation was he to you?"

"He was my mother's first cousin, General; but they were always dear friends, and have for years written regularly to each other, and it was settled that I should come out to him as soon as I was old enough. 'Tis upwards of two years since I did so, and he has been more like a father than a cousin to me during that time."

"You have gone up the tree fast," General Lacy said.

"Very fast, sir; but I owe it to good fortune and not to his influence. I was in each case promoted by the king himself."

"A good judge of men, and not accustomed to give promotion easily. Will you tell me how it happened?"

"There is not much to tell, sir. On the first occasion I freed Count Eulenfurst of some rascals who were maltreating him and his family."

"I remember the circumstance," Lacy said, warmly. "I heard it from a Saxon officer who joined us at the end of the first campaign, after the Saxon army was disbanded and the officers were allowed to go free. He was at Dresden for a

time and heard the story. It was a gallant business. I think you killed six of them. And what was the next occasion?"

"The next followed very quickly, General, and was given for carrying an order to the Prussian horse, which enabled them to get back to our lines before the Austrian cavalry fell upon them."

"I was there," Lacy said. "So you were the officer who charged through a squadron of our cavalry accompanied by a single orderly. You certainly won your promotion fairly there. And where did you get your last step?"

"At Zorndorf, where in the mêlée, when the Russians broke our ranks, I was fortunate enough to intercept three Russian dragoons who were making for the king, who was hemmed in among the infantry he was trying to rally."

"A good reason again for promotion. Well, if you go on, you are likely to rise as high as your cousin. But it is a poor life. As I looked down upon Keith's face to-day, I thought how empty is any honour that adventurers like ourselves can gain. I myself have risen too; but what does it bring? Responsibility, toil, the consciousness that a solitary mistake may bring you into disgrace, and that in any case the end may be like this, death on a battle-field, fighting in a quarrel in which you have no concern, and of which you may disapprove, a grave soon forgotten, a name scarce known to one's countrymen. It is not worth it." The general spoke in a tone of deep feeling.

"I have made up my mind not to continue in the service after the war is over," Fergus said, after a short pause, "although the king has personally been very kind to me, and when the marshal remained in Bohemia he took me on his own staff."

"That is right, and as you are young a few years' further service will do you no harm. It will indeed do you good,

that is, if you pass through it unharmed. A man who has fought under Frederick and gained no small honour in a service where brave men are common, will be respected when he returns to his home, no matter how small his patrimony may be, and you will be in all respects an abler man for these few years of fierce struggle and adventure. And now, Major Drummond, I must say good-bye for the present, as I have to ride over to the marshal, and may not return until late this evening. A meal will be served to you shortly in your room, and if your night has been as short as mine has, you will be ready to turn in early. The funeral will take place to-morrow morning."

The next morning Lacy and Fergus Drummond walked side by side as chief mourners after the gun-carriage on which the remains of Marshal Keith were carried to Hochkirch church. There was a large military cortege, martial music, and infantry with reversed arms. The many wounded had been carried from the church, and some attempt made to clear away the signs of the strife that had, twenty-four hours before, raged around it. There Keith was buried; twelve cannon three times pealed out a parting salute, three times the muskets of the regiment of Colleredo fired their volleys. Four months later by the king's orders the body was conveyed to Berlin, and buried in the garrison church with full military pomp and honour. Twenty years afterwards, when Frederick erected four statues to the most deserving of his generals, Keith had his place with Schwerin, Winterfeld, and Seidlitz.

"And now," Lacy said, when they returned from the funeral to his quarters, "I must send you on after the others. I am sorry to do so, but I have no choice. Still, I will write to friends at Vienna and get them to have you included in the first batch of exchanges."

An officer was told off to accompany Fergus, and a horse was found for him. On the second evening after starting he rejoined the convoy of prisoners, where a message delivered from General Lacy to the officer in charge, caused many small indulgences to be granted to him on the way south. Day after day the convoy pursued its way by short marches, for several of the officers were too severely wounded to travel far. Several of these were left at Prague. Here the greater portion of the others were taken on by the southern road through Budweis, the rest turning south-east towards Moravia. On the evening before they separated, the commander of the convoy said to Fergus:

"Have you any wish to choose as to which of the fortresses you would be sent to? I can put your name down with either party. Some will go to Iglau in Moravia, the rest to the forts round Linz."

"I think I would rather go to Linz, Colonel, as you are good enough to give me the choice."

Accordingly, the next morning Fergus with twenty officers continued his way south. The majority proceeded to Iglau, to be distributed among the various fortresses of Moravia. Fergus was much pleased that he had not been sent with that party, for had he by chance been taken to his former place of imprisonment he would certainly have been recognized, and the strictest precautions taken against his repeating the attempt.

On their arrival at Linz the prisoners were formally handed over to the charge of the governor, and distributed among the various outlying forts round the city. Ten others were told off to the same prison as Fergus.

The fort was the one nearest to the river, on the west side of the city, and stood but a hundred yards from the bank, its guns being intended to prevent any passage of the Danube,

as well as to guard the city against a land attack from that side. It was a strong place, but as it was situated in a flat country it presented no natural obstacle to an escape. It was surrounded by a broad moat, fed by a cut from the river. On the other side of the moat were two small redoubts facing west. The fort contained ample barracks for the garrison of three hundred men who occupied it, with bomb-proofs in which they could take refuge in the event of a siege. Beyond the moat a glacis sloped down to another ditch. The cannon were placed in casemates; some of them had been withdrawn, the casemates fitted with massive shutters, and converted into prisons for the use of officers. Two captains were lodged in the same casemate with Fergus. No light came from without, but there was a low semi-circular window over the door; this was very strongly barred, but admitted sufficient light in the daytime.

"Not such bad quarters," Fergus said, as he looked round. "When the cold weather comes we shall only have to stuff straw through those bars, leaving one square open for light, and manage to hang a thick curtain across it at night. I suppose they will give us a brazier of charcoal when it gets a little colder, though, indeed, it is cold enough now."

"At any rate, we shall have a rest, Major, and that will be a treat after our long marches during the last campaign. I should think that we can sleep the best part of the winter away."

"They fasten the shutters pretty securely," Fergus went on. "They are three inches of solid oak, and you see these bars are all riveted at each end. I suppose they think that they would have plenty of time to cut the rivet heads off before any army could approach."

In a short time the officer in command of the force came round. He was very civil and courteous, and said that he

had already ordered a stove to be sent in, and that they should have some straw laid over the floor.

"You will be permitted to take exercise when you like upon the rampart overhead," he said; "any reasonable request you make shall be attended to. I regret that the misfortune of war should have placed you in my keeping, for we Austrians can appreciate bravery, and we cannot but admit that no braver men are to be found than those in the King of Prussia's army. As to your rations they must be plain. A certain sum is allowed by government for the cost of each prisoner. I make it go as far as I can, but I often wish that the sum were larger. I may say that you are permitted to order any additions to your food from without upon payment, but I need hardly add that the orders must pass through the hands of the officer in charge of you, and that everything brought in is rigidly inspected."

"Have there been any exchanges of prisoners of late?" one of Fergus's companions asked.

"No; it is a compliment to you, gentlemen, for our government apparently places a higher value on you than on us, and is very chary of swelling Frederick's armies by the release of prisoners. Somehow your king seems to make double use of his soldiers. He fights a battle here, then rushes away to meet another enemy two or three hundred miles off, while when we get an advantage we seem so satisfied with ourselves that we sit still until we have let its advantages slip from our hands."

"May I ask if by the last news Marshal Daun is still near Hochkirch?"

"He was so, as far as the yesterday's courier brought news. At first we thought that he had won a tremendous victory and had eaten up Frederick's army, but the later news is that the king marched safely away, and so far from being demolished he

is now perfectly master of his movements, and ready no doubt for another tussle if we should advance. However, I should imagine that the snow will soon put a stop to active operations." Then, bowing courteously, he left them to pay a visit to the prisoners in the next casemate.

CHAPTER XIV

BREAKING PRISON

"HE seems to be a pleasant fellow," Fergus said, "and disposed to do his best to make us comfortable, so if we don't see any chance of getting away we shall be able to get through the winter very fairly."

"You don't think there is any chance of escape, surely, Major?"

"Pray, drop the major, Captain Stauffen, and let us call each other by our names while we are here. The discipline of the Prussian army is admirable, and must as a rule be most stringently maintained by all sorts of forms and observances, but here by our three selves, confined in this casemate for no one can say how long, it is ridiculous that we should be always stiff and ceremonious. You are both some years older than I am. I have had the good fortune to have better opportunities than you have had, and have been promoted accordingly, but while here let us try and forget all about that and make things as pleasant all round as possible."

The two officers agreed, but not without grave doubts; for to them it was quite a serious matter to relax, even in a prison, the stringent rules that guided the relation of officers to each other in the Prussian army.

"It is a strong place," Fergus went on, "but I don't know that it is as difficult to break out of as the last place I was in."

"Have you been a prisoner before?" the two officers asked together, for both belonged to a regiment that was not with Frederick at Lobositz, and had indeed only recently come down from Berlin.

"Yes; I was taken at Lobositz and marched to Spielberg, and managed to get away from there. It is a long story, and will do to pass away the evening when we have got the fire and can sit comfortably and talk round it. My cell there was so high in the castle that, with the wall and the rock below, there was a fall of a hundred and fifty feet at least, so that the difficulties of escape were a good deal greater than they are here —or perhaps I should say seemed to be a good deal greater, for I don't know that they were. There is the tramp of a sentry outside. I suppose he walks up and down the whole length of the six casemates. I counted them as we came in. We are at one end, which, of course, is an advantage."

"Why so?" one of the others asked, with a puzzled expression of face.

"Well, you see, the sentry only passes us once to every twice he passes the casemate in the middle, and has his back to us twice as long at a time."

"I should not have thought of that," Stauffen said. "Yes, I can see that if we were escaping through this door, which seems to me impossible, that it would be an advantage," and he glanced at his companion, as if to say that there was more in this fortunate young officer than they had thought. Among the officers who had served throughout with Frederick, the manner in which Fergus had gained his promotion was well known. His rescue of Count Eulenfurst and his family was the general subject of talk at Dresden, and even putting aside the gallantry of the action, it was considered that the army in

general were indebted to him for having saved them from the disgrace that would have attached to them had this murderous outrage been carried out successfully.

The manner in which he had saved half the Prussian cavalry from destruction, by his charge through the Austrian squadron, had similarly been talked over in every regiment engaged at Lobositz; those who had been at Zorndorf were cognizant of the fact that he had gained his majority by saving the king's life, as this had been mentioned in the general orders of the day. The regiment, however, to which the two officers belonged had come down from Berlin but six months before, and had formed a part of the command of Prince Maurice until Frederick had returned from Zorndorf, and had, with a portion of the force of Prince Maurice, marched out to compel Daun to abandon his impregnable position at Stolpen.

They had not particularly observed Fergus on their journey south; and when, during the last two or three days of the march, they had noticed him, they had regarded him as some fortunate young fellow who had, by royal favour, received extraordinary promotion, and had been pushed up over the heads of older men simply from favouritism. Thus their manner towards him had been even more stiff and ceremonious than usual.

"Do you think, then," Stauffen said, "that there is any chance of our making our escape?"

"Oh, I have not had time to think about it yet," Fergus laughed. "There is generally a way, if one can but find it out; but I have no doubt that it will take a good deal of thinking before we hit upon it, and if it does nothing else for us it will be an amusement through the long evenings to have to puzzle it out. There is no hurry, for it is not likely that there will be any more fighting before the army goes into win-

ter quarters, and so that we are there when the campaign opens in the spring it will be soon enough."

The door opened now. Two soldiers brought in a stove; it was placed nearly in the centre of the room, the flue went up to the top of the arch and then turned at right angles, and passed out of the casemate through a hole just over the window. After lighting the stove they brought in two bundles of rushes and spread them over the floor, and then carried in a tray with dinner and placed it on the little table. There were three stools standing by the side of the three barrack beds, each placed in a corner of the room; these they carried to the table. The others waited to see upon which side Fergus placed his. He put it down on one side.

"Excuse me, Major," Stauffen said, changing it, putting him facing the fire, and placing his own on one side, while his companion was opposite to him; then they stood stiffly waiting until Fergus with a shrug of his shoulders took his place. The dinner consisted of a thin soup, followed by the meat of which it had been made, stewed up and served with a good gravy and two sorts of vegetables; the bread was white and good; a bottle of rough country wine was placed by the side of each.

"The commandant feeds us better here than I was fed at Spielberg," Fergus said, cheerfully. "If I got broth there I did not get meat, if I had meat I had no broth, and they only gave me half a bottle of wine. The commandant evidently does as he says, and makes the money he gets for our keep go far. Let us drink his health and a better employment to him; he evidently feels being kept here instead of being with the army in the field; in fact he is just as much a prisoner as we are, without even the satisfaction of being able to talk over plans for escape. Ah, I see he has sent a box of cigars, too; I finished my last as we rode here to-day, and was wondering

when I should be able to get some more in; also tobacco for my pipe. I hope you both smoke."

Stauffen and his companion, whose name was Ritzer, both did so. "I am glad of that," Fergus said. "I think it is very cheery and sociable when everyone smokes, but certainly when only two out of three do, it looks somehow as if the one who does not is left out in the cold. I never smoked until I came out here two years and a half ago, but there is no doubt that at the end of a day's hard work, or when you have got to do a long ride in the dark, it is very comforting."

His efforts to keep the conversation going were not very successful. The two officers were evidently determined to maintain the distinction of rank, and, saying to himself that they would probably soon get tired of it, he ceased to attempt to break down the barrier they insisted upon keeping up. After dinner was over they lighted their cigars, and then went out and mounted the steps from the yard to the ramparts. They were soon joined by the officers from the other casemates, and separating into groups strolled up and down, making remarks on the country round and the town behind them. Fergus had at once left his fellow-prisoners and joined two or three others with whom he had been previously acquainted, one being a captain of the 3d Royal Dragoons.

"You are with Stauffen and Ritzer, are you not, Major?" the latter said. "I have a brother in the same regiment, and so know them. How do you get on with them?"

"At present they are rather stiff and distant, and insist upon treating me as the senior officer, which is absurd when we are prisoners, and they are both some fifteen years older than I am. I detest that sort of thing. Of course in a great garrison town like Berlin or Dresden the strict rules of discipline must be observed. I think they are carried altogether too far, but as it is the custom of the service, there is nothing

to be said about it; but here, as we are all fellows in misfortune, it seems to me simply ridiculous."

"It becomes a second nature after a time," the officer said. "The two with me are both lieutenants, and I should feel a little surprised if they did not pay me the usual respect."

"Yes, but then you are the older man, and would naturally take the lead in any case. To me, I can assure you, it is most disagreeable to have men much older than myself insisting upon treating me as their superior officer, especially as, their regiment having only recently joined us, I suppose they set me down as some young favourite or other, who has got his promotion over the heads of deserving officers, because he is related to someone in power."

"They ought to know that there is not much promotion to be gained in that way in our army, Major. The king is the last man who would promote anyone for that cause. Why, Schwerin's son has served for four years and is still a cornet in our regiment! No doubt the king would be glad to promote him if he specially distinguished himself, but as he has had no opportunity of doing so, he will probably work his way up in the regiment as everyone else does."

Two or three more officers came up and joined the party, and presently Captain Ronsfeldt strolled away and joined another group. It was not long before he engaged Stauffen and Ritzer in conversation.

"You have Major Drummond in with you, have you not?"

"Yes," Stauffen said, shortly; "who is the young fellow? do you know him?"

"Yes, he first joined our regiment as junior cornet; it was less than two years and a half ago. I was senior lieutenant at the time, and now I am pretty well up on the list of captains, thanks to the work we have done and the vacancies that death has made."

"And that boy has gone over your head, and is now walking about as a major with the order on his breast; it is enough to make one sick of soldiering. Who is he related to?"

"He is related to Marshal Keith," Ronsfeldt said, quietly.

"Ah, that explains it."

"I don't think you quite understand the case, Stauffen. Certainly you don't, if you think that there has been any favouritism. I don't think anyone ever heard of Frederick promoting a man out of his turn save for merit, and I suppose there is no one in the army who has won his rank more worthily, and who is more generally recognized as deserving it. I have never heard a single word raised against the honours he has received. When he rides through the camp men nudge each other and say, 'That young fellow in staff uniform is Major Drummond,' and there is not a soldier but tries to put a little extra respect into his salute."

"Are you joking, Ronsfeldt?" Ritzer asked, in astonishment.

"I was never less so, Ritzer," and he then gave them an account of the manner in which Fergus had obtained his promotion.

The two officers were silent when Ronsfeldt concluded.

"We have made fools of ourselves," Stauffen said at last, "and we must apologize, Ritzer."

"Certainly we must," the other agreed, heartily. "It seemed to us that his trying to make us put aside the respect due to his rank was a sort of affectation, and really impressed it more disagreeably upon us. We took him for an upstart favourite, though we might have known had we thought of it that the king never promotes unduly. Who could possibly have believed that a young fellow, not yet twenty, I should say, could have so distinguished himself? It will be a lesson to us both not to judge by appearances."

The day was cold and cheerless, and after an hour spent on the rampart most of the party were glad to return to the casemates. Fergus was one of the last to go back. To his disgust the two officers rose and saluted formally as he came in.

"We wish," Captain Stauffen said, "to express to you our deep regret at the unworthy way in which we received your request this morning to lay aside the distinction of rank while we are prisoners here. We were both under an error. Our regiments having only joined from Berlin a short time before the king marched with us to Hochkirch, we were altogether ignorant of the manner in which you had gained your rank, and had thought that it was the result of favouritism. We now know your highly distinguished services, and how worthily you have gained each step, and we both sincerely hope that you will overlook our boorish conduct, and will endeavour to forget the manner in which we received your kindly advances."

"Say no more about it, gentlemen," Fergus replied, heartily. "I have had luck and availed myself of it, as assuredly you would have done had the same opportunities occurred to you. I can quite understand that it seemed to you monstrous that at my age I should be your senior officer; I feel it myself. I am often inclined to regret that I should thus have been unduly pushed up. However, let us say no more about it. I do hope that we shall be as three good comrades together, and that, within this casemate at any rate, there will be no question whatever of rank, and that you will call me Drummond, as I shall call you both by your names. Now let us shake hands over the bargain. Let us draw our stools round the stove and have a comfortable talk.

"I have been speaking to Major Leiberkuhn about ordering things. He tells me that the commandant says that one list must be made. On this the orders of each of the case-

mates must be put down separately.' A sergeant will go out every day with it. Money must be given to him to cover the full extent of the orders. He will return the change each day when he hands in the articles required. I have ordered some tobacco, some better cigars than these, and three bottles of good Hungarian wine. The sergeant is going in half an hour, so we shall be able to enjoy our chat this evening. I always take the precaution of carrying twenty golden Fredericks sewn up in the lining of my tunic. It comes in very useful in case of an emergency of this kind."

"I am afraid that neither of us has imitated your forethought," Ritzer said, with a laugh. "I have only my last month's pay in my pocket, and Stauffen is no better off."

"Ah, well! with thirty pounds among us we shall do very well," Fergus said. "We must be careful, because if we do make our escape we shall want money to get disguises."

"You are not really in earnest, Drummond," Stauffen said, "in what you say about escaping?"

"I am quite in earnest about getting away if I see a chance, though I admit that at present the matter seems a little difficult."

"Perhaps if you will tell us about your escape from Spielberg we shall be able to get a hint from it."

They now drew up their seats round the stove, and Fergus told them in detail the manner of his escape, omitting only the name of the noblemen at Vienna who had assisted him.

"It was excellently done," Ritzer said, warmly. "Your making off in that Austrian uniform at the only moment when such a thing could be done, was certainly a masterly stroke."

"So was the taking of the post-horses," Stauffen agreed, "and your getting a disguise from the postmaster. I should

like to have seen the Austrian's look of surprise when he got his uniform back again. I am afraid that your adventures do not afford us any hint for getting away from here. Even you will admit that three Austrian uniforms could not be secured, and the tale by which you procured the post-horses would hardly hold good in the case of three."

"No, if we get away at all it must be done in an entirely different manner. The place is not so difficult to get out of as Spielberg was, for with patience we could certainly manage to cut off the rivet heads of the bars. But I don't see at present how we could cross this wide moat with a sentry pacing up and down thirty feet above us, nor climb up the brick wall on the other side without making a noise. That done, of course we could, on a dark night, cross the glacis and swim the outer moat. All that accomplished, the question of disguises will come in. Just at present it is not very easy to see how that is to be managed. Can you swim?"

Both officers replied in the affirmative.

"Well, that is something gained. As to the rest, we need not bother about it at present; we are not uncomfortable where we are, and if we get back in time for the next campaign that is all that really matters."

The others laughed at the confident tone in which he spoke, but after hearing the details of the prior attempt it seemed to them that their companion was capable of accomplishing what almost seemed to be impossibilities. They had, they knew, very slight chance of being exchanged so long as the war lasted. A few general officers, or others whose families possessed great influence, were occasionally exchanged, but it was evidently the policy of Austria to retain all prisoners. In the first place she desired to reduce Frederick's fighting force, and in the second, the number of Austrians taken had been very much larger than that of the Prussians captured, and the sup-

port of some fifteen or twenty thousand prisoners of war added to the drain on Frederick's resources.

Three campaigns had passed without materially altering the position of the combatants, and as many more might elapse before the war came to an end. Indeed, there was no saying how long it might last, and the prospect was so unpleasant that the two officers were inclined to run a very considerable risk in attempting to obtain freedom. A week later the snow began to fall heavily and the moat froze.

"There is no getting across that without being seen even on the darkest night," Fergus said, as he walked up and down the rampart with his two companions, "unless the sentry was sound asleep; and in such weather as this that is the last thing likely to happen. Unless something altogether unexpected occurs, we shall have to postpone action till spring comes. Now that we have bought some books we can pass the time away comfortably. It was a happy thought of Major Leiberkuhn that each of us should buy one book, so that altogether we have got some forty between us, which, taking our reading quietly, will last us for a couple of months. They mayn't be all equally interesting, but as the sergeant bought them second-hand at about half a franc a volume, we can lay in another stock without hurting ourselves, whenever we choose."

A few days later they bought several sets of draughts, chessmen, and dominoes, and a dozen packs of cards. This had been arranged at a general meeting held in the major's casemate. Strict rules had been laid down that there should be no playing for money. Several of the prisoners had had only a few marks in their pockets when captured. They agreed to meet at three o'clock in two of the casemates by turn, as one would not hold the whole number. This made a great break in their day. It would have been better if the meeting had been held in the evening; but the regulation, that during the

winter months they were locked up at five, prevented this being adopted. So the cold weather passed not altogether unpleasantly.

The strict rule, that every case in which the slightest difference of opinion arose should at once be submitted to the adjudication of Major Leiberkuhn and the senior officer of the casemate in which it occurred, effectually prevented all disputes and quarrels over the cards and other games, and their good-fellowship remained therefore unbroken. In March the sun gained power, the snow and ice began to melt, and Fergus again began to think how an escape could be effected.

"I can think of only one plan," he said to his two companions one evening. "It is clear that it is altogether hopeless to think of getting out by the door, but, as we agreed, it would be possible to chip off the heads of the rivets, unbar the shutters, and let ourselves down into the moat. If we were to make our way along at the foot of the wall, the chance of our being seen by the sentry above would be very slight, for of course we should choose a night when the wind was blowing hard and the water ruffled; in that case any splash we might make would not be heard. Swimming along to the corner of this face of the fort we would turn and keep along until we reached the spot where the cut runs to the river. Crossing the moat to that would be the most dangerous part of the business, and we ought, if possible, to dive across. There is a low wall there and a cheval-de-frise on the top of it. We should have to get out by the side of that, and then either swim along the cut or crawl along the edge of it till we get to the river. Then we must crawl along under the shelter of its banks towards the town till we get to a boat hauled up, or swim to one moored a little way out in the stream; then we must row up the river for some distance and land."

"That all seems possible enough, Drummond," Captain Ritzer said; "but what about our uniforms?"

"We must leave them behind and swim in our underclothes. I should say we should take a couple of suits with us. We could make them up into bundles and carry them on our heads while we swim. Of course if we take them we shall not be able to dive, but must swim across the moat to the cut and trust to the darkness for the sentries not seeing us. Then, once on board a boat, we could take off our wet things and put the dry ones on."

"But we can hardly wander about the country in shirts and drawers, Drummond," Stauffen suggested.

"Certainly not. My idea is that as soon as we are a mile or two away we should either board some boat where we see a light and overpower the boatmen and take their clothes, if they will not sell them to us, or else land at some quiet house and rig ourselves out. There should be no great difficulty about that. Once rigged out we must make south, for as soon as our escape is found out the next morning cavalry will scour the country in every direction on this side of the river and give notice of our escape at every town and village. After lying up quiet for a time we must journey at least fifty miles west. We might make for Munich if we like; or strike the Isar at Landshut, and then work up through Ratisbon, and then through the Fichtel Mountains to Bayreuth, and so into Saxony; or from Landshut we can cross the Bohmerwald Mountains into Bohemia; or, if we like, from Munich we can keep west into Wurtemberg, up through Hesse-Darmstadt and Cassel into Hanover; or, lastly, we can go on to Mannheim and down the Rhine, and then come round by sea to Hamburg."

The others laughed. "It looks a tremendous business anyhow, Drummond, and I should never think of attempting it by myself," Ritzer said; "but if you assure me that you think it will be possible I am ready to try it."

"I think that there is every chance of success, Ritzer. I

really do not see why it should fail. Of course there is risk in it, but once fairly on the other side of the moat and on the river bank it seems comparatively safe. We can see that there are always a lot of boats moored in the stream this side of the bridge, and by taking a small boat we might put off to one of them and get our change of clothes, at once bind and gag the crew—there are not likely to be above two or three of them—give them a piece of gold to pay for the clothes, and then row straight up the river and land a mile or two away; that would make it plain sailing.

"Of course we should push the boat off when we landed, and it would float down past the town before daylight. The chances are that the boatmen, finding that they are no losers by the affair, would make no complaint to the authorities; but even if they did, we should be far beyond their reach by that time. All we have got to do is to choose a really dark night with wind and rain. The first job to be done is to get the heads off these rivets. I have examined them carefully. They are roughly done, and I don't fancy that the iron is very hard, and our knives will, I think, make a comparatively short job of it."

"We could not work at night," Ritzer said. "The sentry in front would hear the noise."

"I think of sawing the heads off," Fergus said. "With the help of a little oil, I fancy the steel will cut through the iron. Yesterday I tapped the edge of my knife against the edge of the stone parapet—it is good steel, but very brittle—and I managed to make a pretty fair saw of it. To-morrow I will do yours if you like."

All carried clasp-knives, for cutting their food with when serving in the field. They had oil which they had bought for dressing salads with, and Fergus at once attacked one of the rivets.

"It cuts," he said, after three or four minutes' work. "Of course it will be a long job, but we ought to do it in a week. There are three bars, and if we cut the rivets at one end of each I have no doubt we shall be able to turn the bars on the rivets at the other end."

They relieved each other at short intervals and worked the greater part of the night. At the end of that time the head of one of the rivets was cut almost through.

"We will leave it as it is now," Fergus said; "a quarter of an hour's work will take it off. As it is, no one would notice what has been done unless he inspected it closely."

Greatly encouraged by this success, the others now entered warmly into his plans. Using his knife instead of a stone, he was able the next day to convert their knives into much better saws than his own had been, and the other two rivets were cut in a much shorter time than the first. They waited another week and then the wind began to rise, and by evening half a gale was blowing and the rain falling heavily. There was no moon, and the night would be admirably suited for their purpose. Their supper was brought in at six o'clock. Knowing that they would not be visited again until the morning they at once began work.

As soon as they had finished cutting one rivet they tried the bar, and their united strength was quite sufficient to bend it far enough to allow it being withdrawn from the rivet; then, throwing their weight upon it, it turned upon the bolt at the other end until it hung perpendicularly. In another half-hour the other two bars were similarly removed, and the heavy shutters opened. They were closed again until their preparations were complete. First they ate their supper, then sat and talked until nine; then they knotted their sheets together, and tied the underclothes into bundles.

"The Austrian government will be no losers," Fergus

laughed. "They will get three Prussian uniforms instead of six suits of prison underclothing. Now, shall I go first, or will one of you?"

"We will go according to rank," Ritzer laughed.

"Very well. Now mind, gentlemen, whatever you do, take the water quietly. I will wait until you are both down, then we will follow each other closely, so that we can help one another if necessary. I can hardly see the water from here, and the sentry being twice as far off from it as we are, will see it less; besides, I think it likely that they will be standing in their sentry-boxes in such a rain as this, and I feel confident that we shall get across without being seen. The river is high, and the opposite wall of the moat is only a foot above the water, so we shall have no difficulty in getting out on the other side. I have the money sewn in a small bag round my neck. We may as well take our knives with us, they will help us to tackle the boatmen. I think that is everything. Now we will be off."

Fastening the sheet firmly to one of the bars, he swung himself out, slid down the rope quietly and noiselessly, and entered the water, which was so cold that it almost took his breath away. He swam a stroke or two along the wall and waited until joined by both his comrades. Their casemate being the end one, they had but some ten or twelve yards to swim to the angle of the wall. Another fifty took them to a point facing the cut. Fergus had paced it on the rampart above, and calculated that each stroke would take them a yard. It was too dark to see more than the dim line of the wall on the other side. He waited until the others joined him.

"Are you all right?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Yes, but this cold is frightful."

"We shall soon be out of it," he said. "Wait till I have gone a few yards, and then follow one after the other."

The surface of the moat was so ruffled by the wind that Fergus had little fear of being seen, even if the sentry above was out and watching, but he felt sure that he would be in his sentry-box, and so swam boldly across. He at once climbed on to the lower wall and helped his two companions out. They were completely numbed by the cold.

"Come along," he said, "we are on the lower side of the cut. Crawl for a short distance, then we can get up and run, which will be the best thing for us." In three minutes they were up on the river bank.

"Now we can change our clothes," he said. "The others will soon get wet through, but they won't be as cold as these are."

The things were soon stripped off. Each gave himself a rub with one of the dry shirts, and they were soon dressed in the double suits and stockings.

"That is better," Fergus said, cheerfully. "Now for a run along the towing path."

A quarter of a mile's run, and circulation was restored, and all felt comparatively comfortable. They had, at the suggestion of Fergus, wrung out the things they had taken off and thrown them over their shoulders, so as to afford some protection against the rain. They now dropped into a slower pace, and after going for a mile they neared the spot where the craft were lying moored in the river. Several small boats were drawn up on the shore. One of these they launched, put out the oars, and rowed quietly to a large barge, fifty yards from the bank, on which a light was burning. Taking pains to prevent the boat striking her side, they stepped on board, fastened the head-rope, and proceeded aft. A light was burning in the cabin, and looking through a little round window in the door, they saw three boatmen sitting there smoking and playing cards. They opened their knives, slid back the door, and stepped in.

CHAPTER XV

ESCAPED

SO astonishing was the spectacle of three lightly clad men appearing suddenly on board a craft moored out on the river that the three boatmen sat immovable, in the attitudes in which they had been sitting at the entry of these strange visitors, without uttering a word. Superstitious by nature, they doubted whether there was not something supernatural in the appearance of the three strangers.

"If you cry out or make the slightest sound," Fergus said, showing his knife, "you are all dead men. If you sit quiet and do as we order you, no harm will come to you. We want clothes; if you have spare ones you can hand them to us, if not, we must take those you have on. We are not robbers, and don't want to steal them. If you will fix a fair price on the things we will pay for them. But you must in any case submit to be bound and gagged till morning, when, on going on deck, you will find no difficulty in attracting the attention of some of your comrades, who will at once release you. Keep your hands on the table while my friends take away your knives. If one of you moves a hand he is as good as a dead man."

His companions removed the knives from the belts of the two men sitting outside, and then Fergus said to the third man:

"Now, hand over your knife. That will do. Now, which of you is the captain?"

"I am," the man sitting farthest from the door said.

"Very well. Now, have you spare clothes on board?"

"Yes, my lord," he replied in a tone that showed that he

had not yet recovered from his first stupefaction, "we have our Sunday suits."

"We don't want them," Fergus said. "We want the three suits that you have on. What do you value them at?"

"Anything you like, my lord."

"No; I want to know how much they cost when new."

The man asked his two comrades, and then mentioned the total.

"Very well, we will give you that, then you will have no reason for grumbling, for you will get three new suits for three old ones. Now do you"—and he touched the man nearest to him—"take off your coat, waistcoat, breeches, neck handkerchief, and boots, and then get into that bunk."

The man did as he was ordered, as did the other two in succession. As they did so Captain Ritzer had gone up on deck, and returned with a coil of thin rope that he had cut off. With this they tied the men securely.

"There is no occasion to gag them, I think," Fergus said. "They might shout as loud as they liked and with this wind blowing no one would hear them, or if anyone did hear them he would take it for the shouting of a drunken man. Now, look here, my men, here is the money to buy the new clothes. We have not ill-treated you in any way, have we?"

"No, sir, we are quite satisfied."

"Now, I should advise you in the morning to manage to untie each other. We shall fasten the door up as we go out, but you will have no difficulty in bursting that open when you are once untied. Now I ask you, as you are satisfied, to say nothing about this affair to anyone; it would only make you a joke among your comrades, and could do you no good. The best thing that you can do when you get free will be to dress yourselves in your Sunday clothes, take your boat ashore, and buy new things in the place of those we have taken."

"That is what we shall do, sir. No one would believe us if we told them that three men had come on board and taken our old clothes and given us money to buy new ones in their place."

The three boatmen were all tall and brawny Bavarians, and their clothes fitted Fergus and his companions well; fishermen's hats completed their costume. The little cabin had been almost oppressively warm, and they had completely got over their chill when they left it, closing the door behind them. They took their places in the boat, crossed to the opposite shore, which was to some extent sheltered from the wind, and rowed some three miles up. Then they landed, pushed the boat off into the stream, kept along the bank until they came to a road branching off to the left, and followed it until it struck the main road a few hundred yards away, and then walked west. There had been but few words spoken since they left the barge. It had been hard work rowing against wind and stream, the oars were clumsy, and it had needed all their efforts to keep the boat's head straight. Now that they were in the main road they were somewhat more sheltered.

"Well, Drummond, we have accomplished what seemed to me, in spite of your confidence, well-nigh impossible. We have got out, we have obtained disguises, and we have eight or nine hours before our escape can be discovered. I shall believe anything you tell me in future," Ritzer said.

"Yes," his companion agreed, "I never believed that we should succeed, though, as you had set your heart on it, I did not like to hang back; but it really did seem to me a wild scheme altogether. I thought possibly we might get out of the fort, but I believed that your plan of getting disguises would break down altogether; the rest seemed comparatively easy. The rain has ceased, and the stars are coming out, which is a comfort indeed. One was often wet through for

days together when campaigning, but after five months' coddling, an eight hours' tramp in a blinding rain would have been very unpleasant, especially as we have no change of clothes. Now, commanding officer, what is to be our next tale?"

"That is simple enough," Fergus said, with a laugh. "We have been down with a raft of timber from the mountains and are on our way back. That must be our story till we have passed Ratisbon. There is but one objection, and that is a serious one. As raftsmen we should certainly speak the Bavarian dialect, which none of us can do. For that reason I think it would be safer to leave the Danube at Passau and make down through Munich. We should be at Passau to-morrow morning and can put up at any little place by the river-side. Two days' walking will take us to Munich. Certainly no one would suspect us of being escaped prisoners. We can get some other clothes to-morrow morning, and finish the rest of our journey as countrymen. The principal thing will be to get rid of these high boots. I think in other respects there is nothing very distinctive about our dress. It will be more difficult to concoct a story, but we must hope that we sha'n't be asked many questions, and I see no reason why we should be. We shall look like peasants going from a country village to a town, but if we could hit upon some story to account for our not speaking the dialect it would of course be a great advantage."

They walked along in silence for some time. Then he went on, "I should say we might give out that we are three Saxons, who, having been forced at Pirna to enter the Prussian army, had been taken prisoners at Hochkirch and had been marched down with the others to Vienna, and that there, on stating who we were and how we had been forced against our will into Frederick's army, we were at once released, and are now on our way back to Saxony, and are tramping through

Bavaria, so as to avoid the risk of being seized and compelled to serve either in the Austrian army or the Prussian; and that we are working our way, doing a job wherever we can get a day or two's employment, but that at present, having worked for a time at Vienna, we are able to go on for a bit without doing so. I think with that story we could keep to the plan of going up through Ratisbon. It would be immensely shorter, and the story would be more probable than that we should make such a big detour to get home."

"Yes, I should think that would do well," Ritzer said, "and will shorten the way by two hundred miles. But after leaving Passau I should think that we had better not follow the direct road until we get to Ratisbon.

"I grant that as far as that town we ought to be quite safe, for there is no chance of their finding out that we have escaped until eight o'clock in the morning, then our colonel will have to report the matter to the commandant in the town. No doubt he will send off a small party of cavalry by the Freyberg road to Budweis, to order the authorities there to keep a sharp look-out for three men passing north. But I doubt very much whether they will think of sending in this direction. The escape of three Prussian officers is, after all, no very important matter. Still, one cannot be too careful, for possibly the commandant may send to Munich, Ratisbon, and Vienna.

"It is more likely, however, that the search will be made principally in and round Linz. They will feel quite sure that we cannot possibly have obtained any disguises, and must have gone off in our undergarments; and they will reckon that we should naturally have hidden up in some outhouse or country loft until we could find some opportunity for obtaining clothes. Most likely the barge went on this morning before the alarm had been given, but even if it didn't, boatmen would not be

likely to hear of the escape of three prisoners. No, I think beyond Passau we shall be quite safe as far as pursuit goes; but it will be best to halt there only long enough to take a good meal, and then to go on for a bit and stop at some quiet river-side village."

"I don't think I shall be able to go very far," Ritzer said. "These boots are a great deal too large for me and are chafing my feet horribly. The road is good and level, and I was thinking just now of taking them off and carrying them."

"That would be the best way by far," Fergus said. "I should think at Passau we are sure to find a boat going up to Ratisbon, and that will settle the difficulty."

The distance was some thirty miles, and, making one or two halts for a rest, they reached Passau just as morning was breaking. In a short time the little inns by the river opened their doors, and the river-side was astir. They went into one of the inns and ate a hearty meal, then they went down to the water-side and found that there were several country boats going up the river. They soon bargained for a passage, and had just time to buy a basket of bread, sausage, and cheese, with half a dozen bottles of wine before the boat started. There were no other passengers on board, and telling the story they had agreed upon, they were soon on good terms with the boatmen. Including the windings of the river, it was some eighty miles to Ratisbon. The boat was towed by two horses and glided pleasantly along, taking three days on the passage. They bought food at the villages where the craft lay up for the night, and arrived at Ratisbon at nine o'clock in the evening. There they found no difficulty in obtaining a lodging at a small inn, where no questions whatever were asked.

A short day's journey took them to Neumarkt, a tramp of upwards of twenty miles; it was a longer journey on to Bamberg, and two days later, to their satisfaction, they entered

Coburg. They were now out of Bavaria, and had escaped all difficulties as to the dialect far better than they had anticipated, never having been asked any questions since they left the boat at Ratisbon. They had now only to say that they were on their way to join the Confederate army that was again being gathered; but they preferred avoiding all questions by walking by night and resting at little wayside inns during the day. Avoiding all towns, for the troops were beginning to move, they crossed the Saxon frontier three days after leaving Coburg, and then travelled by easy stages to Dresden.

Here they went straight to the head-quarters of the commandant of the town and reported themselves to him. Fergus had personal acquaintances on his staff, and had no difficulty in obtaining for himself and his companions an advance of a portion of the pay due to them, in order that they might obtain new outfits. This took a couple of days, and the two captains then said good-bye to Fergus, with many warm acknowledgments for the manner in which he had enabled them to regain their freedom—expressions all the more earnest since they heard that the Austrians had decided that in future they would make no exchanges whatever of prisoners—and started to rejoin their regiments.

Fergus felt strangely lonely when they had left him. The king was at Breslau; Keith was lying dead in Hochkirch. What had become of Lindsay he knew not, nor did he know to whom he ought to report himself, or where Karl might be with his remaining charger and belongings. Hitherto at Dresden he had felt at home; now, save for Count Eulenfurst and his family, he was a stranger in the place. Naturally, therefore, he went out to their chateau. Here he was received with the same warmth as usual.

"Of course we heard of your capture at Hochkirch," the count said, "though not for many weeks afterwards. We

were alarmed when the news came of the marshal's death, for as it was upon his division that the brunt of the battle had fallen, we feared greatly for you. At last came the list the Austrians had sent in of the prisoners they had taken, and we were delighted to see your name in it; though, as the Austrians have been so chary of late of exchanging prisoners, we feared that we might not see you for some time. However, remembering how you got out of Spielberg, we did not despair of seeing you back in the spring. Thirza was especially confident. I believe she conceives you capable of achieving impossibilities. However, you have justified her faith in you. Supper will be served in a few minutes, and as no doubt your story is, as usual, a long one, we will not begin it until we have finished the meal. But tell us first, how were you captured?"

"I was riding through the mist to find the marshal, whom I had not seen for two hours, as I was with the regiment that defended the church at Hochkirch, and then cut its way out through the Austrians. The mist was so thick that I could not see ten yards ahead, and rode plump into an Austrian battalion. They fired a volley that killed poor Turk, and before I could get on my feet I was surrounded and taken prisoner—not a very heroic way, I must admit."

"A much pleasanter way, though, than that of being badly wounded, and so found on the field by the enemy," the countess said; "and you were fortunate indeed in getting through that terrible battle unhurt."

"I was, indeed, Countess; but I would far rather have lost a limb than my dear friend and relation the marshal. I was allowed to attend his funeral the next day. The Austrians paid him every honour, and though I have mourned for him most deeply, I cannot but feel that it was the death he would himself have chosen. He had been ailing for some months,

and had twice been obliged to leave his command and rest. It would in any case probably have been his last campaign, and after such a wonderfully adventurous life as he had led, he would have felt being laid upon the shelf sorely."

"His elder brother—Earl Marischal in Scotland, is he not?—who has been governor for some years at Neufchâtel, is with the king at Breslau at present. They say the king was greatly affected at the loss of the marshal, who, since Schwerin's death, has been his most trusted general."

"I have never seen the marshal's brother," Fergus said, "though I know that they were greatly attached to each other. I hope that he will be at Breslau when I get there. I shall go and report myself to the king after I have had a few days' rest here. At present I seem altogether unattached. The marshal's staff is of course broken up, but as I served on the king's own staff twice during the last campaign, I trust that he will put me on it again."

"That he will do, of course," the count said. "After saving his life at Zorndorf he is sure to do so."

Supper was now announced, and after it had been removed and the party drew round the fire, Fergus told them the story of his escape.

"It was excellently managed," the count said, when he had finished. "I do not know that it was quite as dramatic as your escape from Spielberg, but I should think that, of the two, the escape from Linz must have seemed the most hopeless. The plan of getting the shutters open and of swimming the moat might have occurred to anyone, but the fact that you were in uniform, and that it would have been impossible to smuggle in a disguise, would have appeared to most men an insuperable obstacle to carrying out the plan. You certainly are wonderfully full of resource. As a rule, I should think that it is much more difficult for two men to make their escape

from a place than it is for one alone, but it did not seem to be so in this case."

"It certainly did not add to the difficulty of getting out of the fort, Count; indeed, in one respect it rendered it more easy. There were three of us to work at the heads of the rivets, and it certainly facilitated our getting clothes from the boatmen, besides rendering the journey much more pleasant than it would have been for one of us alone. On the other hand, it would have been impossible to carry out the escape from Spielberg in the manner I did if I had had two officers with me in the cell. We could not have hoped to obtain three uniforms, could hardly have expected all to slip by the sentry unnoticed; lastly, the three of us could not have got post-horses. Still it is quite possible that we might have escaped in some other manner."

"Then you have not the most remote idea where you will find your servant and horse?"

"Not the slightest. If Captain Lindsay got safely through the battle of Hochkirch I should say that my man would stick by him. His servant, a tough Scotchman, and Karl are great chums, and I have no doubt that, unless he received positive orders to the contrary, Karl has kept company with him."

"Of course you can find out from the authorities here who has taken command of Marshal Keith's division, and might possibly hear whether he took over the marshal's personal staff or whether he brought his own officers with him."

"Yes; I should think I might do that, Count. I think I shall in any case report myself to the king; but if Lindsay were stationed at any place I could pass through on my way to Breslau, I would pick up Karl and my horse."

"I shall of course send you another horse to-morrow," the count said. "No, no, it is of no use your saying anything against it. It was settled that I should supply you with

mounts while the war lasted, and I intend to carry that out fully. I don't know that I have another in my stables here that is quite equal to the other pair, but there are two or three that approach them very nearly. If you can get a mounted orderly, well and good, if not I will lend you one of my men. Any of my grooms would be delighted to go with you, for all regard you as the saviour of our lives. I am afraid, my friend, you will not be able to pay us many more visits. Your king is a miracle of steadfastness, of energy, and rapidity, but even he cannot perform impossibilities. Leave out the Russians, and I believe that he would be more than a match for the Austrians, who are hampered by the slowness of their generals; but Russia cannot be ignored. In the first campaign she was non-existent, in the second she annexed East Prussia. This year you have had a deadly tussle with her, next year she may be still more formidable, and I do not believe that Frederick with all his skill, and with the splendid valour his troops show, can keep the Russians from advancing still further into the country, and at the same time prevent the Austrians and the Federal army from snatching Dresden from his grasp. I myself should regret this deeply. Prussia, although she taxes the population heavily, at least permits no disorders nor ill-treatment of the people, no plundering of the villages, while the Austrians, Croats, and Pandoors will spread like a swarm of hornets over the land, and the state of the Saxons under their so-called rescuers will be infinitely worse than it has been under their conquerors."

"It would be a heavy blow to the king to lose Dresden," Fergus agreed, "but I am by no means sure that he would not be better without it, except, of course, that it would bring the enemy so much nearer to Berlin; otherwise the loss of Saxony would be a benefit to him. During all his movements, and in all his combinations, he is forced to keep

an eye on Dresden. At one moment it is Soubise, with his mixed army of French, Austrians, and Confederate troops, who have to be met, and, leaving all else, Frederick is forced to march away two or three hundred miles and waste two or three precious months before he can get a blow at them. Then he has to leave a considerable force to prevent them gathering again, while he hurries back to prevent Daun from besieging Dresden or to wrest Silesia again out of his hands. Saxony lost, he could devote his whole mind and his whole power to the Russian and Austrian armies, who will no doubt at the next campaign endeavour to act together, and the nearer they are to each other, the more easily and rapidly can he strike blows at them alternately."

"Perhaps you are right," the count said, "and certainly the Austrians would have to keep a considerable force to garrison Dresden and hold Saxony, for they would be sure that at the very first opportunity Frederick would be among them raining his blows rapidly and heavily. As to any advance north, they would not dare attempt it, for Frederick, who can move more than twice as fast as any Austrian army, would fall on their flank or rear and annihilate them. Still the blow would be undoubtedly a heavy one for the king, inasmuch as it would greatly raise the spirits of his enemies, and would seem to show them that the end was approaching."

"I think the end is a good way off still, Count. Even if the Russians and Austrians marched across Prussia, they would hold little more than the ground they stood on. Frederick would be ever hovering round them, attacking them on every opportunity, and preventing them from sending off detached columns, while the cavalry of Ziethen and Seidlitz would effectually prevent Cossacks and Croats from going out to gather stores for the armies and to plunder and massacre on their own account. I doubt whether anything short of the

annihilation of his army would break the king's spirit, and so far as I can see that is by no means likely to take place."

"However, the point at present, my friend, is that if the Austrians get Dresden, it may be long before we see you again."

"I fancy that when the army goes into winter quarters again, if I am able to get leave of absence, I shall do myself the pleasure of paying you a visit, whether the city has changed hands or not. If one can travel twice through Austria without being detected, it is hard indeed if I cannot make my way into Saxony."

"But you must not run too great risks," the countess said. "You know how glad we should be to see you, and that we regard you as one of ourselves, but even a mother could hardly wish a son to run into such danger in order that they might see each other for a short time."

"What do you say, Thirza?" her father asked.

The girl, thus suddenly addressed, coloured hotly.

"I should be glad to see him, father—he knows that very well—but I should not like him to run risks."

"But he is always running risks, child, and that, so far as I can see, without so good a reason. At any rate, I shall not join your mother in protesting. What he says is very true, he has twice made his way many hundreds of miles in disguise for the purpose of getting here in time for the first fighting, and I do not think that there will be anything like the same risk in his coming here to pay us a visit. At the same time I would not say a single word to induce him to do so. There is no saying where he may be when the next winter sets in or what may take place during the coming campaign. In times like these it is folly to make plans of any sort three months in advance. I only say, therefore, that, should everything else be favourable, I think that an Austrian occupation of Saxony

would not be a very serious obstacle to his paying us a visit next winter.

"Once here, he would be absolutely safe, and as the household know what he has done for us, and probably for them, for there is no saying whether some at least of them might not have been killed by those villains, their absolute discretion and silence can be relied upon. However, it may be that we shall see him long before that. The king may have occasion to be here many times during the summer."

The count would not hear of Fergus returning to the hotel where he had put up, and for a week he remained at the chateau, where the time passed very pleasantly. The luxurious appointments, the hospitable attentions of his host and hostesses, and the whole of his surroundings formed a strong contrast indeed, both to his life when campaigning and the five months he had spent in the casemate at Linz. At the end of that time he felt he ought to be on the move again. He had learnt that the officers of the marshal's staff had been dispersed, some being attached to other divisions, and that Lindsay was now upon the staff of Prince Henry. The prince was out Erfurt way, and had already had some sharp fighting with the French and the Confederate army.

Fergus had learned this on the day after his arrival at the chateau, and also that to the east there was no sign of any movement on the part of Daun or of the king; he therefore suffered himself to be persuaded to stay on for the week.

"Nobody is expecting you, Drummond," the count said. "No doubt they will be glad to see you, but they will be just as glad ten days later as ten days earlier. You are believed to be safe in some Austrian prison, and you may be sure that no one will make any inquiries whether you spent a week or a month in recovering from your fatigues before taking up your duties again. At any rate, you must stay for at least a week."

"WHY, KARL!" FERGUS EXCLAIMED, "WHERE DO YOU SPRING FROM—WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE?"

The visit was indeed extended two days beyond that time, for the count and countess so pressed him that he was glad to give way, especially as his own inclinations strongly seconded their entreaties. On the ninth morning he was astonished when his bedroom door opened and Karl came in, and gave his morning's salute as impassively as if he had seen him the evening before.

"Why, Karl!" he exclaimed, "where do you spring from —how did you know that I was here—when did you arrive?"

"I arrived last night, Major, but as it was late we went straight to the stable."

"Who is we, Karl?"

"The count's messenger, sir. He reached me at Erfurt, where I was with Captain Lindsay, four days ago, and I started with him half an hour later. He had set out from here with a led horse, and had ridden through with but one night in bed, and we had changes of horses coming back; and Tartar is in good condition, Major; I led him all the way down."

"That is most kind and thoughtful of the count!" Fergus exclaimed, as he began to dress. "Well, I am heartily glad to see you again, Karl; I was by no means sure that you had got off safely at Hochkirch. I looked round for you directly I had been captured, but could see nothing of you, and knew not whether you had ridden off or had been killed by that volley that finished poor Turk and brought about my capture."

"It was a bad business, Major, and I have never forgiven myself that I was not by your side; but the thing was so sudden that I was taken altogether by surprise. My horse was grazed with a bullet, and what with that and the sudden flash of fire he bolted. I had just caught sight of you and Turk going down in a heap as my horse spun round, and it had galloped a full hundred yards before I could check it. Then

I did not know what was best to do. It seemed to me that you must certainly be killed. If I had been sure that you had been wounded and taken prisoner I should have gone back, but even then I might more likely than not have been shot by the Austrians before I could explain matters. But I really thought that you were killed, and as, from the shouting and firing, it seemed to me that the enemy had it all their own way there, I rode back to the farmhouse. Luckily the Austrians had not got there, so I took Tartar and rode with him to the king's quarters, and left him with his grooms, who knew him well enough, and then later on, having nothing else to do, I joined Seidlitz, and had the satisfaction of striking many a good blow in revenge for you.

"Late in the afternoon when the fighting was over I found Captain Lindsay, and told him about your loss. He comforted me a bit by saying that he did not think you were born to be shot, and said that I had better stay with Donald till there was news about you. Two days later he told me they had got the list of the prisoners the Austrians had taken, and that you were with them and unwounded. Then, Major, I was furious with myself that I had not been taken prisoner too. I should have been more troubled still if Captain Lindsay had not said, that in the first place Tartar would have been lost if I had not come back straight to fetch him, and that in the second place, it was not likely you would have been able to keep me with you had I been a prisoner, and we might not even have been shut up in the same fortress.

"I asked him what I had better do, and he said, 'I am going west to join Prince Henry, you had better come with me; you may be sure that there will be no questions asked about you one way or the other. I have no doubt Major Drummond will be back in the spring; he is sure to get out somehow.'

"It seemed to me that that was the best plan too, Major. If I had been sent back to my regiment I don't know what I should have done with your horse, and then, if you did return, I might not have heard about it, and you would not have known what had become of me. Once or twice during the last month Captain Lindsay has said to me, 'Your master ought to have been here before this, Karl; I quite reckoned on his arriving by the end of March.' I said perhaps you had not been able to get out, but he would not hear of it. He said once, 'If you were to head-up the major in a barrel he could find a way out of it somehow; he will be back soon.' He seemed so positive about it that I was not a bit surprised when the messenger came and said that you were at the count's, here, and that I was to ride with him post-haste, so as to catch you before you started to join the king at Breslau. Captain Lindsay was as pleased as I was. He was just mounting when the messenger came in, but wrote a line on the leaf of his pocket-book; here it is, sir."

The slip of paper merely contained the words:

A thousand welcomes, my dear Drummond. I have been expecting you for some time. I wish you had turned up here instead of at Dresden. Hope to see you again soon.

By this time Fergus had dressed. "My dear Count," he exclaimed, as he entered the room where the count and his wife and daughter were already assembled, "how can I thank you for your great kindness in taking such pains to fetch Karl and my horse down for me?"

"I had no great pains about the matter," the count replied, with a smile; "I simply wrote to my steward that a messenger must be sent to Erfurt at once to order Major Drummond's soldier-servant to come here at all speed with his master's horse and belongings. 'Make what arrangements you like,' I

said, 'for relays of horses, but, anyhow, he must get to Erfurt in three days, and I will give him four for coming back again with the man. He is to be found at the quarters of Captain Lindsay, who is on the staff of Prince Henry. If Captain Lindsay himself is away, you must find out his servant.'

"That was all the trouble that I had in the matter. You have really to thank Thirza, for it was her idea. Directly you had left the room, after your telling us that Lindsay was with Prince Henry and most likely at Erfurt, she said: 'I should think, father, that there would be time to fetch Major Drummond's servant and horse. It is not so very far, and surely it might be done in a week.' 'Well thought of,' I said. 'It is a hundred and seventy miles. A courier with relays of horses could do it in three days without difficulty, and might be back here again with Drummond's servant in another four days. I will give orders at once. We can manage to get Drummond to delay his departure for a day or two.' So the thing was done."

CHAPTER XVI

AT MINDEN

ON the following day Fergus started, riding the new horse the count had given him, while Karl led Tartar. The journey to Breslau was performed without adventure. He found on arrival that the king had ten days before gone to Landshut, round which place a portion of his army was cantoned. At Landshut he commanded the main pass into Bohemia, was in a position to move rapidly towards any point where Daun might endeavour to break through into Silesia,

and was yet but a few marches from Dresden, should the tide of war flow in that direction.

Already several blows had been struck at the enemy. As early as the 16th of February Prince Henry had attacked the Confederate army, which, strengthened by some Austrian regiments, had intended to fortify itself in Erfurt, and driven it far away, while the Prince of Brunswick had made a raid into the small Federal states and carried off two thousand prisoners. Early in March a force from Glogau had marched into Poland and destroyed many Russian magazines, while on April 13th, the very day on which Fergus arrived at Breslau, Duke Ferdinand had fought a battle with the French army under Broglio, near Bergen. The French, however, were very strongly posted, and Ferdinand was unable to capture their position, and lost twenty-five hundred men, while the French loss was but nineteen hundred.

On the same day Prince Henry crossed the mountains and destroyed all the Austrian magazines through the country between Eger and Prague, containing food for an army of fifty thousand for five months, captured three thousand prisoners, and burnt two hundred boats collected on the Elbe, near Leitmeritz, and was back again after an absence of but nine days. A fortnight later he was off again, marching this time towards Bamberg, burning magazines and carrying off supplies. He captured Bayreuth and Bamberg, took twenty-five hundred prisoners, and struck so heavy a blow at the little princelings of the Confederacy that he was able to leave matters to themselves in the west, should the king require his aid against Daun or the Russians. On the 16th of April Fergus arrived at Landshut and proceeded to the royal quarters. On sending his name to the king he was at once ushered in.

"So you have returned, Major Drummond," Frederick said,

cordially, "and in plenty of time to see the play, though, indeed, I should not be surprised if it is some time before the curtain draws up. I had some hopes that you might rejoin, for after your last escape I doubted whether any Austrian prison would hold you long. I am glad to see you back again. Ah, it was a heavy loss that of our good marshal. None but myself can say how I miss him. He was not only as a general one of the best and most trustworthy, but as a friend he was always cheery, always hopeful, one to whom I could tell all my thoughts. Ah, if I had but taken his advice at Hochkirch I should not have had to mourn his loss. It was a heavy blow to you also, Major Drummond."

"A heavy blow indeed, your Majesty. He was as kind to me as if he had been my father."

"I will try to supply his place," the king said, gravely. "He died in my service, and through my error. For my own sake I am glad that you are here. You have something of his temperament, and I can talk freely with you, too, whatever comes into my head."

"I did not know whether I did rightly in coming to report myself direct to you, sire, but your kindness has always been so great to me that I thought it would be best to come straight to you instead of reporting myself elsewhere, having indeed no fixed post or commander."

"You did quite right. By the way, Keith's brother, the Scottish Earl Marischal, is here."

He touched a bell, and said to the officer who came in, "Will you give my compliments to Earl Marischal Keith, and beg him to come to me for a few minutes." Two minutes later Keith entered—a tall man, less strongly built than his brother, but much resembling him.

"Excuse my sending for you, Earl Marischal," the king said, "but I wanted to introduce you to your young cousin,

Major Drummond, a very brave young officer, as you may well imagine, since he has already gained that rank, and wears our military order of the Black Eagle. He tells me that he has not hitherto met you, but he came over here at your brother's invitation, was a very great favourite of his, and was deeply attached to him."

"My brother mentioned you frequently in his letters to me," Keith said, holding out his hand to Fergus. "I knew but little of your mother, first cousin as she is, for being ten years older than my brother, she was but a little child in my eyes when I last saw her. Were it not that I am past military work, I would gladly try to fill my brother's place to you; but if I cannot aid you in your profession, I can at least give you a share of my affection."

"As to his profession, Keith, that is my business," the king said. "He saved my life at Zorndorf, and has in so many ways distinguished himself that his success in his career is already assured. He is, by many years, the youngest major in the service, and if this war goes on there is no saying to what height he may rise. He has just returned from an Austrian prison, where, as I told you when you joined me, he was carried after Hochkirch. I don't know yet how he escaped. He must dine with me this evening, and afterwards he shall tell us about it. Mitchell dines with us also. He, too, is a friend of this young soldier, and has a high opinion of him."

That evening after dinner Fergus related to the party, which consisted only of the king, Keith, and the British ambassador, how he had escaped from prison.

"The next time the Austrians catch you, Major Drummond," the king said, when he had finished, "if they want to keep you, they will have to chain you by the leg, as they used to do in the old times."

For months the Prussian and Austrian armies lay inactive. Daun had supposed that, as the king had begun the three previous campaigns by launching his forces into Bohemia, he would be certain to follow the same policy, and he had therefore placed his army in an almost impregnable position, and waited for the king to assume the offensive. Frederick, however, felt that with his diminished forces he could no longer afford to dash himself against the strong positions so carefully chosen and intrenched by the enemy, and must now confine himself to the defensive and leave it to the Austrians to attempt to cross the passes and give battle. The slowness with which they marched, in comparison with the speed at which the Prussian troops could be taken from one point to another, gave him good ground for believing that he should find many opportunities for falling upon the enemy when in movement.

It was a long time before the Austrian general recognized the change in Frederick's strategy, still longer before he could bring himself to abandon his own tactics of waiting and fortifying, and determine to abandon his strongholds and assume the offensive. When July opened he had by various slow and careful marches planted himself in a very strong position at Marklissa, while Frederick as usual was watching him. Daun was well aware that Frederick of all things desired to bring on a battle, but knowing that the Russians, one hundred thousand strong, under Soltikoff, were steadily approaching, he determined to wait where he was and to allow the brunt of the fighting for once to fall on them. Fergus by this time was far away. The long weeks had passed as slowly to him as they had to the king, and he was very glad indeed when, on the 2d of June, Frederick said to him:

"I know that you are impatient for action, Major Drummond. Your blood is younger than mine, and I feel it hard enough to be patient myself; however, I can find some em-

ployment for you. Duke Ferdinand has now, you know, twelve thousand English troops with him. He has written to me, saying that, as neither of his aides-de-camp can speak English, he begs that I would send him an officer who can do so, for very few of the British are able to speak German, and serious consequences might arise from the misapprehension of orders on the day of battle. Therefore I have resolved to send you to him, and you can start to-morrow at daybreak. I will have a despatch prepared for you to carry to the duke, who, of course, by the way, knows you, and will, I am sure, be glad to have you with him. Later on I must send another of my Scottish officers to take your place with him, for I like having you with me. However, at present you are wasting your time, and may as well go."

"We are off again to-morrow morning, Karl," Fergus said, in high spirits, as he reached his quarters.

"That is the best news that I have heard since the count's messenger brought me word at Erfurt that you had returned, Major. It has been the dullest six weeks we have had since we first marched from Berlin, for while in winter one knows that nothing can be done, and so is content to rest quietly, in spring one is always expecting something, and if nothing comes of it one worries and grumbles."

"It is a long ride we are going this time, Karl."

"I don't care how long it is, Major, so that one is moving."

"I am going to join the Duke of Brunswick's staff."

"That is something like a ride, Major," Karl said, in surprise, "for it is right from one side of Prussia to the other."

"Yes, it is over four hundred and fifty miles."

"Well, Major, we have got good horses, and they have had an easy time of it lately."

"How long do you think that we shall take?"

"Well, Major, the horses can do forty miles a day, if they have a day to rest half-way. Your horses could do more, riding them on alternate days, but it would be as much as mine could do to manage that."

"We must take them by turns, Karl, that will give each horse a partial rest—one day out of three."

"Like that they could do it, I should say, Major, in about a fortnight."

They rode first to Breslau, and thence to Magdeburg, passing through many towns on the long journey, but none of any great importance. At Magdeburg they heard that they must make for Hanover, where they would be able to ascertain the precise position of the duke's army, which was on the northern frontier of Westphalia.

While the French, under the Duke of Broglio, were advancing north from Frankfort-on-Main, another French army, under Contades, was moving against Ferdinand from the west. As it was probable that there would at least be no great battle until the two French armies combined, Fergus, who had already given his horses two days' complete rest, remained for three days at Magdeburg, as it was likely that he would have to work them hard when he joined the duke.

Five days later he rode into the Duke of Brunswick's principal camp, which was near Osnabrück, where was situated his central magazine.

"I am glad to see you, Major Drummond," the duke said, cordially, when Fergus reported himself. "I thought perhaps the king would select you for the service, and I know how zealous and active you are. I am greatly in need of a staff-officer who can speak English, for none of mine can do so. I think that we shall have some hard fighting here soon. You see that I am very much in the position of the king, menaced from two directions. If I move to attack Contades,

Broglio will have Hanover entirely open to him; while if I move against him, Contades will capture Münster and Osnabrück and get all my magazines, and might even push on and occupy the town of Hanover before I could get back. So you see I have nothing to do but to wait in this neighbourhood until I see their designs.

"I have some twelve thousand of your countrymen here, and I rely upon them greatly. We know how they fought at Fontenoy. Splendid fellows they are. There is a Scotch regiment with them, whose appearance in kilts and feathers in no slight degree astonishes both the people and my own soldiers. Their cavalry are very fine, too. They have much heavier horses than ours, and should be terrible in a charge. How long have you been on the road?"

"I have been eighteen days, sir. I could have ridden faster myself, having a spare charger, but my orderly could hardly travel more rapidly; and indeed when I got to Magdeburg, and found that it was not likely that there would be any engagement for some time, I allowed the horses three days' rest, so that they should be fit for service as soon as they arrived here."

A tent was at once erected in the staff lines for Fergus. He found, upon inquiry, that the British division was at present at Münster. He was invited by the duke to dinner that evening, and was introduced to the officers of the staff, who received him courteously, but with some surprise that one so young should not only bear the rank of major, but the coveted insignia of the Black Eagle.

The duke, however, when the introductions were over, gave them a short account of the newcomer's services, and after dinner begged Fergus to tell them how he escaped from Linz, and they had a hearty laugh over the manner in which he and his companions obtained their first disguise.

"I have heard something of this," Colonel Zolwyn, the head of the staff, said. "Captains Stauffen and Ritzer were both ordered here on their arrival at Berlin, and though I have not met them, I have heard from others of their escape from Linz, which they ascribed entirely to a major of Marshal Keith's staff, who was a fellow-prisoner of theirs."

For the next three weeks Fergus was on horseback from morning till night. The movements of the troops were incessant. The two French generals manœuvred with great skill, giving no opportunity for the Duke of Brunswick to strike a blow at either. Broglio, guided by a treacherous peasant, captured Minden by surprise. Contades, with thirty thousand men, had taken up an unassailable position, his right wing on the Weser and his left on impassable bogs and quagmires, and with his front covered by the Bastau, a deep and unfordable brook. Thirty thousand of his troops were occupied in besieging Münster and Osnabrück and other places, and succeeded in capturing the latter, containing the duke's magazines of hay and cavalry forage.

The duke's position became very grave, and the French believed that in a very short time they would be masters of all Hanover. Broglio's force of twenty thousand men was on the east side of the Weser, and Ferdinand was unable to move to strike a blow at the detached force of Contades, for had he done so Broglio would have captured the city of Hanover, which lay perfectly open to him within a day's march. Fergus had been specially employed in carrying despatches to the British division, and had made many acquaintances among the officers. As the army gradually concentrated when the French forces drew closer together, he often spent the evening in their tents when the day's work was done.

In the Scotch regiment he was soon quite at home. The fact that he was related to Marshal Keith, of whom every

Scotchman was proud, and had been one of his aides-de-camp, sufficed in itself to render him at once popular. The officers followed with eager interest the accounts of the various battles he had witnessed, and little by little extracted from him some account of the manner in which he had won his steps so rapidly in the Prussian service. He found that they, and the British troops in general, had a profound dislike for Lord Sackville, who commanded them, but who was especially in command of their cavalry. All described him as a heavy, domineering fellow, personally indolent and slow, on ill terms with the Duke of Brunswick, whom in a quiet and obstinate way he seemed bent on thwarting.

"He is an ill-conditioned brute," one of the officers remarked. "The only thing to be said for him is that he is not deficient in personal courage. He has fought several duels, into which he brought himself by his overbearing temper."

Although he had frequently carried despatches to Sackville, Fergus had not exchanged a word with him. The English general had taken the paper from his hand, barely acknowledging his salute, and not indeed glancing at him, but turning on his heel and walking off to read the contents of the despatch, which generally appeared to displease him, judging by the manner in which he spoke to his officers. Then he would go into his tent, and one of his aides-de-camp would shortly come out with a letter containing his reply.

Fergus naturally came to regard the English commander with the same dislike that his own officers felt for him. One day when handing him a despatch he omitted the usual salute. Sackville noticed it at once.

"Why do you not salute, sir?" he said, raising his head and for the first time looking at the duke's aide-de-camp.

"This is the twelfth time, sir, that I have brought de-

spatches from the Duke of Brunswick. Upon each occasion I have made the military salute. By the regulations of the army, I believe. that the superior officer is as much bound to return a salute as the inferior officer is to render it. As you have not chosen upon any one of those twelve occasions to return my salute, I see no reason why I should continue to give it."

Sackville looked at him as he shouted in English, with astonishment and rage:

"And who the devil are you?"

"I am Major Fergus Drummond, a companion of the order of the Black Eagle, and an aide-de-camp of the King of Prussia."

"The deuce you are," Sackville said, insolently. "I did not know that the King of Prussia promoted lads to be majors, chose them for his aides-de-camp, and made them companions of his order."

"Then, sir, you know it now," Fergus said, quietly; "and for an explanation of my rank I beg to refer you to the Duke of Brunswick, who will, I doubt not, be not unwilling to explain the matter to you."

"I shall report your insolence to the duke at any rate, sir. Were it not for my position here I would myself condescend to give you the lesson of which you seem to me to be in want."

"I should doubt, sir, whether I could receive any lesson at your hands; but after this affair has terminated I shall be happy to afford you an opportunity of endeavouring to do so."

Lord Sackville was on the point of replying, when the colonel of his staff, whom Fergus had met at dinner at the duke's, and who spoke German fluently, came up and said:

"Pardon me, General, can I speak to you for a moment?"

Fergus reined back his horse a length or two, while the officer spoke rapidly to Lord Sackville.

"I don't care a fig," the latter burst out passionately.

The officer continued to speak. The general listened sullenly, then turning to Fergus he said:

"Well, sir, we shall leave the matter as it is. As soon as this battle is over I shall waive my rank and meet you."

"I shall be ready at any time," Fergus said, and then formally saluting he rode away.

"I suppose you have no answer, Major Drummond," the duke said, when he returned to his quarters; "but, indeed, there is none needed."

"I have no answer, sir, and indeed did not wait for one. Lord Sackville and I had a somewhat hot altercation;" and he related word for word what had passed.

"It is a pity, but I cannot blame you," the duke said, when Fergus had finished. "The man has given me a great deal of trouble ever since he joined us with his force. He is always slow in obeying orders. Sometimes he seems wilfully to misunderstand them, and altogether he is a thorn in my side. I am glad indeed that the British infantry division are entirely under my control; with them I have no difficulty whatever. He was entirely in the wrong in this matter, and I certainly should address a remonstrance to him on the subject of his manner and language to one of my staff, but our relations are already unpleasantly strained, and any open breach between us might bring about a serious disaster."

"I certainly should not wish that you should make any allusion to the matter, sir. Possibly I may have an opportunity of teaching him to be more polite after we have done with the French."

By two sudden strokes the duke, in the third week of July, obtained possession of Bremen, thereby obtaining a port by which stores and reinforcements from England could reach him, and also recaptured Osnabrück, and found to his great satisfaction that the French had also established a magazine

there, so that the stores were even larger than when they had taken it from him. The great point was to induce Contades to move from his impregnable position. He knew that both Contades and Broglio were as anxious as he was to bring about a battle did they but see an advantageous opportunity, and he took a bold step to tempt them.

On the 30th of July he sent the Hereditary Prince with a force of ten thousand men to make a circuit and fall upon Gohfeld, ten miles up the Weser, and so cut the line by which Contades brought up the food for his army from Cassel, seventy miles to the south. Such a movement would compel the French either to fight or to fall back. It was a bold move, and had it not succeeded would have been deemed a rash one, for it left him with but thirty-six thousand men to face the greatly superior force of the French. The bait proved too tempting for the French generals. It seemed to them that the duke had committed a fatal mistake. His left, leaning on the Weser, was by the march of the force to Gohfield left unsupported at a distance of three miles from the centre, and it seemed to them that they could now hurl themselves into the gap, destroy the duke's left, and then crush his centre and right, and cut off whatever remnant might escape from Hanover.

On Tuesday evening, July 1st, the French got into motion as soon as it was dark. During the night Contades crossed by nineteen bridges that he had thrown across the Bastau, while at the same time Broglio crossed the Weser by the bridge of the town, and took up his position facing the Prussian left wing, which rested on the village of Todtenhausen, intending to attack him early in the morning, and to finish before the duke could bring the centre to his assistance. Feeling sure that the French would fall into the trap, the duke ordered his cavalry to mount at one o'clock in the morning and moved

in with his troops from the villages around which they were encamped, closing in towards Minden, whereby the centre gradually came into touch with the left, the whole forming a segment of a circle, of which Minden was the centre.

The French also formed a segment of a similar circle, nearer to Minden. Contades was a long time getting his troops into position, for great confusion was caused by their having crossed by so many bridges, and it took hours to range them in order of battle. Broglio was in position, facing the duke's left, at five o'clock in the morning. He was strong in artillery and infantry, but as the ground on both flanks was unfavourable for the action of cavalry, these were all posted in the centre. The cavalry, indeed, was the strongest portion of the force. They numbered ten thousand, and were the flower of the French army.

The duke placed six regiments of British infantry in his centre. They were the 12th, 20th, 23d, 25th, 37th, and 51st. Some regiments of Hanoverians were in line behind them; the British cavalry were on the duke's right. The morning was misty, and it was not until eight o'clock that both sides were ready, and indeed even then Contades's infantry was not finally settled in its position.

The battle began with an attack by some Hessian regiments on the village of Hahlen, and by a very heavy fire of artillery on both sides. The orders to the English regiments had been, "*March to attack the enemy on sound of drum*," meaning that they were to move when the drums gave the signal for the advance. The English, however, understood the order to be, "*You are to advance to the sound of your drums.*" They waited for a time, while the attack on Hahlen continued. It was repulsed three times before it succeeded, but before this happened the English regiments lost patience, and said, "We ought to be moving." The drums therefore struck up, and

to the astonishment of the Hanoverians these English battalions strode away towards the enemy. However, the regiments of the second line followed. As the British stepped forward a tremendous cross fire of artillery opened upon them, thirty guns on one side and as many on the other, but in spite of this the six regiments pressed on unfalteringly, with their drums beating lustily behind them.

Then there was a movement in their front, and a mighty mass of French cavalry poured down upon them. The English halted, closed up the gaps made by the artillery, held their fire until the leading squadrons of the French were within forty paces, and then opened a tremendous file fire. Before it man and horse went down. At so short a distance every bullet found its billet, and for the first time in history a line of infantry repulsed the attack of a vastly superior body of cavalry. Astonished, and hampered by the fallen men and horses of their first line, the French cavalry reined up and trotted sullenly back to re-form and repeat the charge. The British drums beat furiously as the French rode forward again only to be repulsed as before. Six times did the cavalry, with a bravery worthy of their reputation, renew the charge. Six times did they draw back sullenly, as the leading squadrons withered up under the storm of shot; then they could do no more, but rode back in a broken and confused mass through the gaps between their infantry, throwing these also into partial confusion.

"Ride to Lord Sackville and tell him to charge with his cavalry at once," the duke said to Fergus; and then checking himself said, "No, I had better send someone else," and repeated the order to another of his staff. Sackville only replied that he did not see his way to doing so. A second and then a third officer were sent to him with a like result, and at last he himself left his cavalry and rode to the duke and inquired "How am I to go on?"

The duke curbed his anger at seeing the fruits of victory lost. He replied, quietly, "My lord, the opportunity is now past." Harassed only by the fire of the British and Hanoverian guns and by that of the British infantry, Contades drew off his army by the nineteen bridges into his stronghold. Broglio, who had done nothing save keep up a cannonade, covered the retreat with his division. The total amount of loss on the duke's side was two thousand eight hundred and twenty-two, of which more than half belonged to the British infantry. The French loss was seven thousand and eighty-six, with their heavy guns and many flags; but had Sackville done his duty, their army would have been annihilated, pent up as it was with the river on each flank, convergent to each other at Minden, a perfect rat-trap from which no army could have escaped had it been hotly pressed by cavalry.

The feat performed by the British infantry astonished Europe, who were at first almost incredulous that six regiments in line could have repulsed over and over again, and finally driven off the field ten thousand of the best cavalry of France.

While the battle was raging the Hereditary Prince had done his share of the work, had fallen upon Gohfeld, crushed the French division guarding it, cutting the French from their magazines, and rendering their position untenable. They received the news that evening, and at once commenced their retreat, Broglio towards Frankfort and Contades straight for the Rhine. The latter was obliged to abandon all his baggage and many of his guns, and his army by the time it had reached the Rhine had become a mere rabble. The general was at once recalled in disgrace, and Broglio appointed commander-in-chief, although by failing to carry out the orders he had received, to fall upon the allies left at five in the morning, he had largely contributed to the defeat that had befallen Contades.

CHAPTER XVII

UNEXPECTED NEWS

THE fury of the British cavalry at the shameful inactivity in which they had been maintained was unbounded, and their commander, if he moved from his tent, was saluted with hisses and jeers by the troopers. It was not for long, however, for as soon as the news was known at home he was ordered to return. On the afternoon of the same day an officer rode over to head-quarters and asked for Major Drummond.

"I am here, sir," he said, courteously, "on behalf of Lord Sackville. He will be leaving for England to-morrow, and I am the bearer of a hostile message from him. I shall be obliged if you will put me in communication with some officer who will act on your behalf."

"Certainly," Fergus replied. "I was expecting such a message." He had already heard of the order that Sackville had received, and had requested Major Kurstad, a fellow aide-de-camp, to act for him should he send him a hostile message. Going in he spoke to Kurstad, who at once went out and introduced himself to the British officer.

"This is a painful business," the latter said, "and I can assure you that I do not undertake it willingly. However, I overheard the altercation between Lord Sackville and Major Drummond, and the same night he asked me to act for him when the time for it came. I consented, and cannot draw back from the undertaking, but I need hardly say that after what happened at Minden no English officer, unless previously pledged, would have consented to act for him. I suppose, sir, there is no use in asking whether the matter cannot be arranged."

"Not in the slightest. Major Drummond told me that he had expressed his willingness to meet the general, and he is certainly not one to withdraw from his word. My friend chooses swords, in fact the use of pistols on such occasions is quite unknown in the Continental army."

"As Lord Sackville leaves to-morrow morning we should be glad if you would name an early hour."

"As early as you like; it is light at half-past four."

"Then shall we say five o'clock?"

"Certainly."

"And the place?"

"There is a small clump of trees on the heath two miles west of our camp."

"We will be there at that time, sir. Would you object to each side being accompanied by a second friend? I ask it because, did anything happen to my principal, I should certainly wish that another witness was present at the duel."

"We have no objection," Major Kurstad said. "We shall also bring a surgeon with us, and of course you can do the same if you are disposed."

The two officers saluted, and the major returned to Fergus.

"Do you mean to kill him?" he asked, after he had told him of the arrangements that had been made.

"Certainly not; the man is an overbearing fool, and I merely wish to give him a lesson. Personally, I should be glad if the whole of the officers of the British force could be present, in order that he might be as much humiliated as possible, but even if I hated the man—and I have no shadow of feeling of that kind—I would not kill him. He is going home to England to be tried by court-martial, and its sentence is likely to be a far heavier blow to a bully of that kind than death would be. He has a taste of it already, for I hear that he is hooted whenever he leaves his tent."

At the appointed time the two parties arrived almost at the same moment at a spot arranged. Fergus was accompanied by Major Kurstad and another officer of the duke's staff, and by the duke's own surgeon. Formal salutations were exchanged between the seconds, the duelling swords were examined and found to be of the same length. There was no difficulty in choosing the ground, as there was an open space in the centre of the little wood, and the sun had not risen high enough to overtop the trees. As, therefore, the glade was in shade, there was no advantage in point of light to either combatant. Lord Sackville had the reputation of being a good fencer, but in point of physique there was no comparison between the combatants. Sackville was a tall and powerfully built man, but dissipation and good living had rendered his muscles flabby and sapped his strength, although he was still in what should have been his prime.

Fergus, on the other hand, had not a superfluous ounce of flesh. Constant exercise had hardened every muscle. He was a picture of health and activity. The general viewed him with an expression of vindictive animosity, while his face, on the other hand, wore an expression of perfect indifference. The uniform coats were removed, and the dropping of a handkerchief gave the signal for them to commence. Lord Sackville at once lunged furiously. The thrust was parried, and the next moment his sword was sent flying through the air. His second did not move to recover it.

"Why do you not bring it here?" Sackville exclaimed, in a tone of the deepest passion.

"Because, my lord," his second said, coldly, "as you have been disarmed, the duel necessarily terminates, unless your antagonist is willing that the sword shall be restored to you."

"I shall be obliged if you will give it him, Major Buck,"

'LORD SACKVILLE STOOD WITHOUT SPEAKING, WHILE THE SURGEON BANDAGED UP HIS ARM"

Fergus said, quietly. "A little accident of this sort may occur occasionally, even to a noted swordsman when fighting with a boy."

The general was purple with passion when he received the sword from his second.

"Mind this time," he said between his teeth, as, after a preliminary feint or two, he again lunged. Again the sword was wrenched from his hand with a force that elicited an exclamation of pain from him.

"Pray, give the general his sword again, Major Buck," Fergus said. "You hold your rapier too tightly, General Sackville. You need a little more freedom of play and less impetuosity. I don't want to hurt you seriously, but your blood is altogether too hot, and next time I will bleed you on the sword arm."

Steadying himself with a great effort, Sackville played cautiously for a time; but after parrying several of his thrusts without the slightest difficulty, Fergus ran him through the right arm, half-way between the elbow and the shoulder, and the sword dropped from his hand. Lord George Sackville had borne himself well in several duels, and was accounted a gentleman, though arrogant and overbearing. He stood without speaking while the surgeon bandaged up his arm. Then he said, quietly:

"I ask your pardon, Major Drummond. This matter was altogether my fault. I said that I would give you a lesson, and you have given me one, which assuredly I shall never forget. I trust that you will accept my apology for the words I uttered."

"Certainly, General, the more so that I own I gave provocation by failing to salute you, my only excuse for which is, that officers of the highest rank in Prussia always return the salute of a junior officer of whatever rank, and that I did not reflect that you, having many important matters in your

mind, might have neglected to return mine from pure absent-mindedness, and not with any intentional discourtesy. I can only say that I have not spoken of this matter to any but my three friends here, and I am sure that the matter will not be mentioned by them when it is my earnest request that it shall go no further."

The parties then mutually saluted and rode off to their respective camps. The story of the duel did not leak out from Fergus's friends, but Sackville had openly spoken of the matter the evening before to several officers, and had added to their disgust at his conduct by declaring that he wished it had been the Duke of Brunswick, instead of this upstart aide-de-camp of his, with whom he had to reckon the next morning. He on his part exacted no pledge from the officers who had accompanied him, but rode back to camp without speaking a word, and an hour later left in a carriage for Bremen. The news of the encounter then circulated rapidly, and excited intense amusement and the most lively satisfaction on the part of the British officers.

On Sackville's arrival in England he was tried by court-martial, sentenced to be cashiered, and declared incapable of again serving his Majesty in any military capacity. This the king proclaimed officially to be a sentence worse than death, and, taking a pen, he himself struck out his name from the list of privy-councillors. No satisfactory explanation has ever been given of Sackville's conduct at Minden. Many say it is probable that he was disgusted and sulky at having to rise so early, but this would hardly be a sufficient explanation. The more probable conjecture is, that as he was on notoriously bad terms with the duke, he was willing that the latter should suffer a severe repulse at Minden, in the hope that he would be deprived of his command, and he himself appointed commander-in-chief of the allied army.

A few days after the battle the exultation caused by the victory at Minden was dashed by the news that a Prussian army twenty-six thousand strong, commanded by Wedel, had been beaten by the Russians at Züllichau; and ten days later by the still more crushing news that Frederick himself, with fifty thousand men, had been completely defeated by a Russian and Austrian army, ninety thousand in number, at Kunersdorf, on the 11th of August. At first the Prussians had beaten back the Russians with great loss; the latter had rallied, and, joined by Loudon with the Austrian divisions, had recovered the ground and beaten off the Prussians with immense loss, the defeat being chiefly due to the fact that the Prussian army had marched to the attack through woods intersected with many streams, and that, instead of arriving on the field of battle as a whole, they only came up at long intervals, so that the first success could not be followed up, and the regiments who made it were annihilated before help came.

The news came from Berlin. A letter had been received there from the king written on the night after the battle. He said that he had but three thousand men collected round him, that the circumstances were desperate, that he appointed his brother Prince Henry general-in-chief, and that the army was to swear fidelity to his nephew. The letter was understood to mean that Frederick intended to put an end to his life. He knew that the enmity of his foes was largely directed against him personally, and that far easier terms might be obtained for the country were he out of the way, and he was therefore determined not to survive irreparable defeat; indeed, he always carried a small tube of deadly poison on his person.

Universal consternation was felt at the news. However, three days later came the more cheering intelligence that twenty-three thousand men had now gathered round him, and that he had again taken the command. The loss in the battle,

however, had been terrible—six thousand had been killed, thirteen thousand wounded; two thousand of the latter, too seriously wounded to escape, were made prisoners. The loss of the enemy had been little inferior, for eighteen thousand Russians and Austrians were killed or wounded. Another letter sent off by the king that night had disastrous consequences, for he wrote to the governor of Dresden that, should the Austrians attempt anything on the town beyond his means of maintaining himself, he was to capitulate on the best terms he could obtain. Happily for Frederick, Soltikoff was as slow in his movements as Daun, and for two months made no attempt to take advantage of the victory of Kunersdorf, and thus afforded time to Frederick to repair his misfortunes.

But during the two months Dresden had been lost. Its governor had received Frederick's letter, and was unaware how things had mended after it was written, and that a force was pressing forward to aid him against an Austrian besieging army. Consequently, after little more than a nominal resistance, he surrendered, when, unknown to him, relief was close at hand.

The French being defeated and in full flight for the Rhine, it seemed to Fergus that it was his duty to return to the king, as there was no probability whatever of any hard fighting on the western frontier, while the position of affairs in the east was most serious. He was still on the king's staff, and had but been lent to the Duke of Brunswick. He laid the matter before the latter, who at once agreed with him that he should rejoin the king.

"Frederick sorely needs active and intelligent officers at present," he said. "It is not by force that he can hope to prevent the Russians and Austrians from marching to Berlin, but by quickness and resource. His opponents are both slow and deliberate in their movements, and the king's quickness

puzzles and confuses them. It is always difficult for two armies to act in perfect concert, well-nigh impossible when they are of different nationalities. Daun will wait for Soltikoff and Soltikoff for Daun; the king will harass both of them. Daun has to keep one eye upon his magazines in Bohemia, for Prince Henry in Silesia still constantly menaces them, and not only the Austrian but the Russian army is fed from Prague. Were it not that I am specially bound to defend Hanover from the Confederate army, I would march with the greater portion of my force to join the king; but my orders are imperative. 'Tis for Hanover that George of England is fighting, and the British subsidy and the British troops will be lost to the king were Hanover to be taken by the enemy. If Prince Henry could but join him it would bring his army again to a strength with which he could fight either the Russians or Austrians, but their armies lie between Henry and the king, and unless Daun makes some grievous mistake—and slow as he is Daun seldom makes a mistake—it seems well-nigh impossible that the prince can get through. However, Major Drummond, you are likely to see little fighting here, while with the king there will be incessant work for you. Therefore, by all means go to him; he must have lost many of his staff at Kunersdorf, and will, I doubt not, be glad to have you with him."

The ride was a shorter one than it had been when going west, for the king lay little more than fifty miles to the east of Berlin. Although there was no absolute occasion for great speed, Fergus rode fast, and on the tenth day after leaving Minden arrived at the royal camp. The king was unaffectedly glad to see him.

"You have been more fortunate than I have," he said; "you have been taking part in a victory, while I have been suffering a defeat. I should like to have seen Minden. That

charge of your countrymen was superb. Nothing finer was ever done. Rash, perhaps; but it is by rashness that victory is often won. Had it not been done, one would have said that it was impossible for six battalions in line to hurl back again and again the charges of ten thousand fine cavalry. But the British division at Fontenoy showed us, not many years ago, that the British infantry now are as good as they were under Marlborough. I would give much if I had twenty thousand of them here with my Prussians; it would be the saving of us. Did Ferdinand send you back, or did you ask to come?"

"I asked leave to come, sire. I thought that your staff must have suffered heavily, and that I might be more useful here than with the duke."

"Much more useful, Major, and indeed I am glad to have you with me. You have youth and good spirits, and good spirits are very scarce here. Have you heard the last news?"

"I have heard no news since I left Berlin, sire."

"Dresden is lost. Schmettau surrendered it, and that when relief was but within ten miles of him. The place should have held out for a month at least. It is incredible; however, I will have it back again before long, and at any rate it is one place less to guard. I should not have cared so much if the Austrians had taken it, but that that wretched Confederate army, even though they had ten Austrian battalions with them, should have snatched it from me, is heart-breaking. However, they have but the capital, and it will take them some time before they can do more."

Fink, who had been sent off with six or seven thousand men to aid Wunsch to relieve Dresden on the day before the news of its fall came, did much. He and his fellow-commander failed in their first object, but they were not idle, for they recaptured Leipzig and other towns that the Confederate

army had taken, and snatched all Saxony, save Dresden, from its clutches.

Schmettau was relieved of his command and never again employed. He had certainly failed in firmness, but Frederick's own letter to him, which had never been cancelled, afforded him the strongest ground of believing that there was no chance of his being relieved. His record up to this time had been excellent, and he was esteemed as being one of Frederick's best generals. Frederick's harshness to him was at the time considered to have been excessive. The king, however, always expected from his generals as much as he himself would have accomplished in the same circumstances, and failure to obtain success was always punished. After the dismissal of his brother and heir from his command the king was not likely to forgive failure in others.

The time was a most anxious one for him. He had nothing to do but to wait, and for once he was well content to do so, for every day brought winter nearer, every week would render the victualling of the hostile armies more difficult, and delay was therefore all in his favour. Messenger after messenger was sent to Prince Henry, urging him to make every possible effort to make his way through or round the cordon of Austrian and Russian posts, eighty miles long and fifty or sixty broad, that intervened between them.

In the evenings the king was accustomed to put aside resolutely his military troubles, and passed his time chiefly in the society of the British ambassador, Earl Marischal Keith, and the young Scottish aide-de-camp, with occasionally one or two Prussian officers. One evening, when Fergus had been sent with an order to a portion of the force lying some miles away, Sir John Mitchell said to the king:

"I have been talking with the Earl Marischal over young Drummond's affairs, your Majesty. As you know, his father's

estates were sequestrated after the battle of Culloden, where he himself fell. I am writing a despatch to Pitt, saying that Drummond's son has been serving under your Majesty through the war, and has greatly distinguished himself, and have asked him to annul the sequestration upon the ground that this young officer has done very valiant service to your Majesty, and so to the allied cause, giving a list of the battles at which he has been present, and saying that the Duke of Brunswick had, in his report of the battle of Minden to you, spoken highly of the services he rendered him. If you would add a line in your own hand endorsing my request, it would greatly add to its weight."

"That I will readily do," the king said. "I will write a short letter which you can inclose in your own despatch." And sitting down at once he wrote:

The King of Prussia most warmly endorses the request of his Excellency Sir John Mitchell. Not only has Major Fergus Drummond shown exceptional bravery upon several occasions, which resulted in his promotion to the rank of major with unprecedented rapidity, but he saved the king's life at the battle of Zorndorf, meeting and overthrowing three Russian cavalrymen who attacked him. It would, therefore, give the king very great satisfaction if the English minister would grant the request made on Major Drummond's behalf by his Excellency the English ambassador.

"Thank you very much," the latter said, as he read the note Frederick handed him. "I have no doubt that this will be effectual. Culloden is now a thing of the past. There are many Scottish regiments in the English king's service, and many acts of clemency have of late been shown to those who took part in the rebellion, and I cannot doubt that Pitt will at

once act upon your request. However, I shall say nothing to Drummond on the subject until I hear that his father's estates have been restored to him."

As day after day passed, the king became more anxious as to the position of Prince Henry. That energetic officer had indeed been busy, and by threatening an attack upon Daun's magazines had compelled the Austrian commander to move to Bautzen for their protection, and finally to make a decided effort to crush his active and annoying foe. Gathering a great force in the neighbourhood of Prince Henry's camp, he prepared to attack him on the morning of September 22d, but when morning came Prince Henry had disappeared. At eight o'clock on the previous evening he had marched twenty miles to Rothenburg.

The retreat was superbly conducted. It was necessary to move by several roads, but the whole of the baggage, artillery, and troops arrived punctually the next morning at Rothenburg just at the hour when Daun's army moved down to the attack of the camp where he had been the evening before. Austrian scouting parties were sent out in all directions, but no certain news could be obtained as to the direction of the Prussian march. The baggage-waggons had been seen moving here and there, but it was four days before Daun was able to learn for certain what had become of him, having until then believed that he must have made for Glogau to join Frederick. Henry had, however, gone in an entirely different direction; after ordering three hours' rest at Rothenburg he marched west, and arrived at early morning at Klitten, eighteen miles from his last halting-place.

Starting again after another three hours' halt he marched twenty miles farther, still straight to the west, and fell upon General Weyler, who with thirty-three thousand men occupied the last Austrian position to be passed. That officer had

not the slightest idea of any possibility of attack from the east, the whole Austrian army stood between him and Frederick on the north-east, and Prince Henry on the south-east. He was therefore taken altogether by surprise. Six hundred of his men were killed, and he himself with twenty-eight field-officers and seventeen hundred and eighty-five other officers and men taken prisoners.

This march of fifty hours, in which an army with the whole of its baggage traversed fifty-eight miles through a country occupied by enemies, is one of the most remarkable on record, and completely changed the whole situation of the campaign. There was nothing for Daun to do, if he would not lose Dresden and the whole of Saxony again, but to follow Prince Henry. This movement completed the dissatisfaction of his Russian ally Soltikoff, who had been already sorely worried and harassed by Frederick ever since Daun had moved away to defend his magazines and crush Prince Henry, and now, seeing that his own food-supply was likely to fail him, he marched away with his army into Poland.

The king was at this time, to his disgust and indignation, laid up for six weeks with the gout, but as soon as he was better he set off to join Prince Henry. Daun was slowly falling back, and had he been let alone Dresden might have been recaptured and the campaign come to a triumphant ending. Unfortunately Frederick was not content to leave well alone, and sent Fink with seventeen thousand men to Maxim to cut off Daun's retreat into Bohemia, intending himself to attack him in front. Daun for once acted with decision, attacked Fink with twenty-seven thousand men, and although the Prussians fought with most obstinate bravery, they were surrounded, battered by the Austrian artillery, while they themselves, having no guns with which to make reply, were forced to surrender. Some had already made

their way off, but in killed, wounded, and prisoners, the loss was fully twelve thousand men.

Frederick threw the blame upon Fink, but most unjustly; that officer had followed out the orders given him, and had done all that man could do to hold the position that he was commanded to take up, and the disaster was wholly due to Frederick's own rashness in placing so small a force, and that without artillery, where they could be attacked by the whole Austrian army. Fink, after his release at the conclusion of the peace three years later, was tried by court-martial and sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

This disaster entirely altered the situation. Daun, instead of continuing his retreat to Bavaria, advanced to occupy Saxony, and drove General Dierocke across the Elbe, taking fifteen hundred of his men prisoners. Frederick, however, barred the way farther, and six weeks later both armies went into winter quarters, Daun still holding Dresden and the strip of country between it and Bohemia, but the rest of Saxony being as far out of his reach as ever.

The last six weeks of the campaign was a terrible time for all. Frederick himself had lived in a little cottage in the small town of Freyburg, and even after the armies had settled down in their cheerless quarters, he still made several attempts to drive the Austrians out, having received a reinforcement of ten thousand men from Duke Ferdinand. These efforts were in vain. The ten thousand, however, on their way to join the king, had struck a heavy blow at one of his bitterest enemies, the Duke of Würtemberg, who had twelve thousand of his own men with one thousand cavalry at Fulda. The duke had ordered a grand ball to be held, and great celebrations of joy at the news of the Austrian victory at Maxim, but on the very day on which these things were to take place, Ferdinand's men fell upon him suddenly, scattered

his army in all directions, took twelve hundred prisoners, and sent the duke with such of his troops as had escaped back to Würtemberg again, his subjects, who were largely Protestants, rejoicing hugely over his discomfiture. On the day on which Maxim was fought, Admiral Hawke with a small squadron utterly defeated the French fleet that was to convey an invading army to England. France herself was getting as short of cash as Prussia, and in November it became necessary to declare a temporary bankruptcy, and the king setting the example, all nobles and others possessing silver plate sent it to the mint to be coined into money.

So eager was the king to take advantage of any openings the Austrians might give for attack, that although so near Dresden, Fergus was unable to carry out his promise to the Count Eulenfurst to pay him a visit, for he was kept constantly employed, and could not ask for leave. Early in April the king sent for him; the English ambassador was present, but Earl Marischal Keith had gone away on a mission.

"I have two pieces of news for you, Major," the king said, pleasantly. "In the first place, it is now getting on for two years since you did me that little service at Zorndorf, and since then you have ever been zealously at work. Others have gone up in rank, and it is time that you had another step; therefore, from to-day you are colonel. No man in the army has better deserved promotion, and indeed you ought to have had it after you returned from Brunswick's army, where, as the duke's despatches told me, you had rendered excellent service. So many officers of rank have fallen since then, that promotion has been rapid, and it is high time that you obtained the step that you so well deserve. The other piece of news is for Sir John Mitchell to tell you, for it is to his good offices that it is due."

"Very partially so, your Majesty," said the ambassador. "It is like enough that Pitt would not have troubled to take action on my recommendation only, had it not been that you so strongly backed my request that in fact it became one from yourself; therefore it is for you to give him the news."

"As you please," the king said. "Well then, Drummond, his Excellency and your cousin the Marischal put their heads together, and his Excellency sent a warm letter to the English minister saying that you had rendered such services to his sovereign's ally that he prayed that the sequestration of your father's estate should be annulled. I myself added a memorandum saying that, as you had saved my life at Zorndorf, and rendered me other valuable services, I should view it as a personal favour if his request was granted. The thing would have been managed in a couple of days in this country, but in England it seems that matters move more slowly, and his Excellency has only to-day received an official intimation that the affair has been completed, and that your father's estates have been restored to you."

Fergus was for the moment completely overwhelmed. He had never thought for a moment that the estate would ever be restored, and the sudden news following that of his promotion completely overwhelmed him. It was of his mother rather than of himself that he thought. He himself had been too young to feel keenly the change in their life that followed Culloden; but although his mother had borne her reverses bravely, and he had never heard a complaint or even a regret cross her lips, he knew that the thought that he would never be chief of their brave clansmen, and that these had no longer a natural leader and protector, was very bitter to her.

"Your Majesty is too good. Your Excellency—" and he stopped.

"I know what you would say," the king said, kindly, "and

there is no occasion to say it. I have only paid some of the debt I owe you, and his Excellency's thought gave me well-nigh as much pleasure as it does you. Now, be off to your camp. You see, Sir John, between us we have done what the Austrians and Russians have never managed between them—I mean, we have shaken Colonel Drummond's presence of mind. There, go along with you, we have matters to talk over together."

Fergus saluted almost mechanically, bowed gratefully to Mitchell, and then left the room in a whirl of emotion. To be the head of his clan again was to him a vastly greater matter than to be a colonel in even the most renowned and valiant army in Europe.

Of the estates he thought for the moment but little, except that his mother would now be able to give up her petty economies and her straitened life, and to take up the station that had been hers until his father's death. There was another thought too, that of Countess Thirza Eulenfurst. Hitherto he had resolutely put that from him. It was not for him, a soldier of fortune, without a penny beyond his pay, to aspire to the hand of a rich heiress. It was true that many Scottish adventurers in foreign services had so married, but this had seemed a thing altogether beyond him. He had rendered a service to her father, and they had in consequence been most kind to him, but he had thought that it would be only a poor return for their kindness, for him to aspire to their daughter's hand.

He had put the matter even more resolutely aside, because once or twice the count had said things that might be construed as hints that he should not regard such an act as presumptuous. He had spoken not unapprovingly of the marriages of ladies of high rank to men who had rendered great services to the countries for which they had fought, and said that, with such

ample means as Thirza would possess, there would be no need for him to seek for a wealthy match for her. Thirza herself had evinced lively pleasure whenever he went to see them, and deep regret when he left them, while her colour rose sometimes when he came upon her suddenly; but these indications that he was not altogether indifferent to her, had but determined him more resolutely to abstain from taking advantage of the gratitude she felt for the service he had rendered. Now, it seemed to him that the news he had heard had somewhat changed the position.

He was no longer a penniless soldier. It was true that the Drummond estates were as nothing by the side of the broad lands owned by her father; but at least now he was in the position of a Scottish gentleman of fair means and good standing, who could dispense with wealth on the part of a bride, and had a fair home and every comfort to offer to one in his native land. That he had, too, obtained the rank of colonel in the Prussian army by service in many a desperate battle, distinctly added to his position. Thus in every respect the news that he had received was in the highest degree gratifying to him.

CHAPTER XVIII

ENGAGED

ON the following day Sir John Mitchell handed to Fergus the official documents respecting the restoration of the estates, and after taking copies of the same, Fergus wrote a long letter to his mother inclosing the official papers, Mitchell having offered to send the packet home with his despatches.

Fergus was glad to get the documents sent off in this way—by which, indeed, he had sent the greater part of his letters to his mother—the post being so uncertain and insecure that there was no trusting it; and although his mother's replies were always sent to the care of the ambassador, a large number of them were lost in the transit.

Early in April Fergus suddenly broke down. His work had been almost incessant; the cold in the tent had at night been extreme, and having been wetted to the skin one day when a sudden thaw came on, his clothes had been frozen stiff when at nightfall the frost returned with even greater severity than before. In spite of the cloaks and blankets that Karl heaped upon his bed he shivered all night, and in the morning hot fits came on. The king's surgeon, coming in to see him, pronounced that the chill had resulted in what was probably rheumatic fever. He was at once carried to a hospital some miles in the rear. This was crowded with officers and men suffering from the effects of their hardships, but a room was assigned to him in a house close by that had been taken for the use of officers of distinction.

Here for two months he lay helpless and at times delirious. Karl sat up with him almost night and day, taking two or three hours' sleep occasionally on the floor, but starting up whenever his master moved or spoke. Sir John Mitchell rode over several times to see him, and the king's own surgeon went over twice a week. These visits, however, both ceased three weeks after he entered the hospital, the king's army having rapidly marched away. At the end of June he was out and able to sit in the sun in the garden.

"How long shall I be before I am fit for duty again?" he asked the surgeon two days later.

"Six weeks or two months; it will be fully that time before you can regain your strength. In a month, no doubt, you

will be able to sit a horse, but I should say that it would be quite twice that time before you will be fit to perform the work that falls to your lot on the king's staff. You want to have quiet, and at the same time you need pleasant company. The worst thing you can possibly do is to worry and fret yourself; instead of bringing things about sooner it will only delay them. What you have to do is to bask in the sun, eat and drink as much as you can, and take life pleasantly.

"There is one thing, you have nothing to grieve about that you are not with the king. He is marching hither and thither with wonderful celerity, but do what he will he cannot induce either Daun or Lacy to give battle, though together they are three to one against him. Whenever he approaches they simply shut themselves up in impregnable places, erect palisades and batteries, and hope that he will dash himself against them, which he is not likely to do."

Fergus found that Frederick, when he marched, had left behind a force sufficient to check any attempt that the Austrian garrison of Dresden might make towards the north, but that at present all was quiet, the enemy venturing on no aggressive movements, never knowing when the king might suddenly pounce down upon them.

He found that there was no attempt made to blockade the town; no carts with provisions were allowed to pass in from the north side, but on the west there was free ingress and egress, there being no Prussian troops in that direction. Fergus therefore hired a peasant to carry a letter for him to Count Eulenfurst, explaining how it was that he had been unable to get leave during the winter, and that for the last two months and a half he had been laid up in the hospital.

Three days later a carriage drove up to the house, the count himself leapt out and hurried across the garden to where Fergus was sitting.

"This is indeed kind of you, Count," Fergus said, as he rose.

"By no means, Drummond. I only wish that we had known your situation before. You should have got someone to write if you could not do it yourself. We were not surprised at your not visiting us in the winter, for with both armies on the alert we knew that in the first place you were busy, and probably not able to get leave of absence, and in the next place you could hardly have got in. You can imagine the concern we felt when your letter reached us yesterday evening. Of course I determined to start at once. You must indeed have had a hard time of it, for you have fallen away so much that I should hardly have known you."

"I have picked up very much in the last fortnight, Count, and I hope in another month to be something like myself again, though the doctor insists that I shall not be fit for campaigning work for double that time."

"Well, I have come to take you back with me. The countess asks me to tell you that if you do not come at once she will drive hither with two or three of her maids and establish herself as your nurse. It will not be a very long drive, for I am well known to the Austrians, and have a pass from the governor to go through their lines when I please, and to visit a small estate I have thirty miles to the north. And no doubt you can get a similar pass for us to leave your lines."

"I should like nothing so much, Count; but might I not get you into trouble if it were known that you had one of the king's officers at your house?"

"In the first place no one would know it, and in the second place I don't think that I should get into any trouble were it found out. It is not a Prussian officer that I shall be entertaining, still less a spy, but a dear friend who is an invalid and needs care. As everyone knows what you did for me,

the excuse would be ample. Moreover, it happens that Governor Maguire is a personal friend of mine, and I shall call upon him and tell him that I have a sick friend staying with me, and, without letting him know who you are, say that I give him my word of honour that you will, while with me, remain in the grounds, and will make no inquiries concerning his fortifications and plans of defence. He will understand what I mean, and if anyone should make a report to him it will at any rate cause no trouble, though I do not say that he might not feel obliged to give me notice that you had best go. Well, for to-day I will remain here and rest my horses, and to-morrow morning we will start early. Ah, I see you have your henchman still with you; he, like yourself, has escaped both Austrian and French bullets.

"Well, Karl," he went on, as the soldier came up, "you don't seem to have managed to keep your master out of mischief."

"No, Count; but it was not my fault, it was the fault of those horses you gave him."

"Why, how was that, Karl?"

"Well, sir, the colonel was the best mounted man on the king's staff, and however hard he worked the horses they always seemed to keep in good condition. So that, whenever there was anything to be done it was sure to be, Colonel Drummond, please go here or go there; he was always on horseback, and so at last he broke down. Anyone else would have broken down months before, but he never seemed to know what it was to be tired."

"What, have you got another step, Drummond?" the count said, smiling at the soldier's tone of discontent.

"Yes, Count. It is not for anything particular this time, but for what I may call general services. You are going to have an easy time of it now, Karl. Count Eulenfurst is kindly

going to take me off and nurse me for a bit, and you will have to stay here and look after the horses until I return. It would not be safe for you to accompany me, and I think you want a rest as much as I want nursing. Why, for two months, Count, this good fellow never took off his coat, and I don't think he ever slept an hour at a time. I have never once called when he was not there to answer."

"I did what I could," Karl growled, "but it was not much. The colonel has always looked well after me, and the least I could do was to look after him when he wanted it. I am very glad he is going with you, sir. It is dull enough for him here, and I am sure he will get on much faster under your care and the ladies' than he would do moping about in this place."

Fergus wrote a note to the general of the division, and Karl returned with a pass authorizing Count Eulenfurst's carriage to pass through the lines at any time.

"There is one difficulty I have not thought of, Count. I have no civilian clothes. Those I brought with me were left in the magazine at Dresden when I first marched away, and there they have been ever since; but, indeed, even if I had them I do not think that they would fit me, seeing that I have grown some four inches in height since I came out, and at least as much more round my shoulders."

"I thought of that," the count said, "and have brought with me a suit from Dresden that will, I think, fit you as well as an invalid's clothes can be expected to fit."

The next morning an early start was made. No difficulties were encountered on the way, and although sundry detours had to be made, they reached the count's house after a three-hours' drive. Thirza ran down to meet them as the count drove up, and she gave a little cry of surprise and pity as the count helped Fergus to alight.

"I shall soon be better, Countess," he said, with a smile, as

he held out his hand. "I am quite a giant in strength compared with what I was a fortnight ago, but just at present I am a little tired after the drive."

"You look dreadfully bad," the girl said. "Still, I hope we shall soon bring you round again. My father said you would be back with him about this time, and we shall begin by giving you some soup at once."

As they entered the hall the countess herself came down.

"Welcome back again. I may say, I hope, welcome home again, Major Drummond."

"Colonel Drummond," the count corrected. "He is one of Frederick's colonels now."

"I congratulate you," she went on, "though just at present you certainly do not look a very formidable colonel. However, we will soon build you up; but don't try to talk now. I see the journey has been almost too much for you. In here, please. I thought you had better take something before you climbed the stairs."

A meal was laid in a room leading off the hall, and after a basin of soup and a couple of glasses of Rhine wine, Fergus felt much better.

"That is right," the count said. "You have now got a tinge of colour in your cheeks. Come, Thirza, you must not look so woe-begone because our knight is pulled down a bit. Invalids want a cheerful face, and unless you brighten up I shall not intrust any of the nursing duties to you."

Thirza tried to smile, but the attempt was a very forced one.

"It has been a surprise," she said, quietly, but with an evident effort. "You see I have always seen Colonel Drummond looking so strong and bright. Though I knew that he had been very ill, somehow I did not expect to see him like this."

"But I can assure you I am better," Fergus said, laughing. "I did feel done when we arrived, but I can assure you that is not my normal state, and being here among you all will very soon effect a transformation. In a very short time you will see that I shall refuse altogether to be treated as an invalid, and my nurse's post will be a sinecure."

"Now you had better go and lie down and get a sleep for two or three hours," the countess said, decidedly. "You will have your old bedroom, and we have fitted up the next room as a sitting-room. We know a good many of the Austrian and Confederate officers, and of an afternoon and evening they often drop in; and although we are not afraid of questions, it will be more pleasant for you to have a place of your own. Still, I hope you will be able to be out in the garden behind the house the best part of the day under the trees; you would be as safe from interruption there as if you were a hundred miles away from Dresden. We have arranged that Thirza shall have chief charge of you out there, while the count and I will look after you while you are in the house."

Fergus obediently lay down and slept for some hours.

As the countess had arranged he rang his bell on waking, and hearing from the servant who answered it that there were no visitors downstairs, he went down. The count had gone out, but the countess and Thirza went out into the grounds with him, and he found that in a quiet and shady corner a sofa had been placed for his use, with a table and two or three chairs. The countess remained chatting with him until a servant came out to say that three Austrian officers had called, and she went in, leaving him to the charge of Thirza. For two or three hours they talked together, and were then joined by the count and countess, when Fergus told them the piece of good fortune that had befallen him by recovering his father's estates. They were greatly pleased and interested.

"And are they extensive?" the count asked.

"They are extensive," he said, "if taken by acreage, but if calculated by the revenue that they bring in they would seem small to you; but at any rate they suffice to make one wealthy in Scotland. The large proportion of it is mountain and moorland; but as the head of my clan I shall hold a position far above what is represented by the income. Two hundred men were ready to draw sword at my father's orders, and to follow him in battle. I don't know that here in Germany you can quite understand the ties that bind the members of a clan to their head. They do not regard him as tenants regard a lord, but rather as a protector, a friend, and even a relation. All disputes are carried to him for arbitration; the finest trout from the stream, the fattest buck from the hills, are sent to him as an offering.

"They draw their swords at his bidding, and will die for him in battle. To them he is a sort of king, and they would obey his orders were he to tell them to rise in rebellion. The feeling is to some extent dying out, and since Culloden the power of the clans has greatly abated. Nevertheless, some of the Highland regiments in our army were raised by chiefs wholly from their own clansmen. In many respects this restoration of my inheritance changes my position altogether. As I told you the last time I was here, I shall stop until this terrible war is over. The king has been most kind and gracious to me, and to leave before the struggle is over I should feel to be an act of desertion. Once the sword is sheathed I intend to return to Scotland, for I should not care to remain in the service when there is naught but life in garrison to look forward to. Moreover, the strength of the army would, of course, be largely diminished at once. What I should do afterwards I know not. Perhaps I might obtain a commission in our own army, for there are always oppor-

tunities of seeing service in America, India, or elsewhere under the British flag. More likely I shall, at any rate for a time, remain at home. My mother has no other child, and it is a lonely life indeed for her."

"Do you not think of settling here?"

"What is there for me to do, Count, outside the army? I could not turn merchant, for I should assuredly be bankrupt at the end of the first month, nor could I well turn cultivator when I have no land to dig. Now, however, my future is determined for me, and a point that has, I own, troubled me much has been decided without an effort on my part."

The conversation was continued for some little time, the count asking many questions about Fergus's ancestral home, the scenery, and mode of life. Fergus noticed that Thirza took no part in the conversation, but sat still and looked, he thought, pale.

The days succeeded each other quietly and uneventfully, and Fergus gained strength rapidly, so that in the middle of July he began to feel that he was again fit for service. One evening he was sitting alone in the garden with the count, when the latter said to him:

"You remember our conversation on the first evening of our coming here, as to the impossibility of your doing anything did you remain out here after leaving the army. There was one solution to which you did not allude. Many Scottish and Irish soldiers, both in this country, in France, Austria, and Germany, have married well. Why should you not do the same?"

Fergus was silent for a minute, and then he said:

"Yes, Count, but they continued in the service, rose to the rank of generals, and, as in the case of my cousin Keith, to that of marshal."

"But you might do the same if you remained in the army,"

the count said. "You are assuredly by far the youngest colonel in it, you are a favourite of the king's, and might hope for anything."

"I am afraid, Count, I have too much of our Scottish feeling of independence, and should not, therefore, like to owe everything to a wife."

"The feeling is creditable if not carried too far," the count said. "You have a position that is a most honourable one; you have made your name famous in the army, where brave men are common; you possess the qualities of youth, a splendid physique, and—I don't wish to flatter you—a face that might win any woman's fancy. There are none, however placed, who might not be proud of such a son-in-law."

"You judge everyone by yourself, Count," Fergus said, slowly. "You overrate my qualities, and forget the fact that I am, after all, but a soldier of fortune."

"Then you never thought of such a thing?"

Fergus was silent for a minute, and then said:

"We may think of many things, Count, that we know in our hearts are but fancies which will never be realized."

"Let us suppose a case," the count said. "Let us take a case like mine. You did me an inestimable service; you certainly saved my life, and the lives of several others, including, perhaps, those of my wife and daughter. The latter has constantly heard your name associated with deeds of valour. Would it be improbable that she should feel a depth of gratitude that would, as she grew, increase into a warmer feeling; while you, on your part, might entertain a liking for her? Would it be such an out-of-the-way thing for you to come to me and ask her hand? or an out-of-the-way thing that I should gladly give her to you?"

"It may not seem so to you, Count," Fergus said, quietly, "but it has seemed so to me. I understand what you are so

generously saying, but even with such encouragement I can scarce dare to ask what seems to me so presumptuous a question. For four years now this house has been as a home to me, and it was but natural that as your daughter grew up I should have grown to love her. I have told myself hundreds of times that it would be indeed a base return for your kindness were I to try to steal her heart, and never have I said a single word to her that I would not have said aloud had you and her mother been present. During the month that I have been here now I have struggled hard with myself, thrown with her, as I have been, for hours every day. But I have made up my mind that no word should ever pass my lips, and if it has done so now, it is because you have drawn it from me."

"I am glad that I have done so," the count said, gravely. "For the last two years I have hoped that this might be so, for in no other way could I repay our debt of gratitude to you. I cannot tell what Thirza's thoughts are, but there have been three suitors for her hand this year, any of whom might well, in point of means and character, have been considered suitable; but when I spoke to her she laughed at the idea, and though she said nothing, I gathered that her love was already given. As my only child, her happiness is my first consideration. As to the question of means, it is absurd to mention them, for did she marry the wealthiest noble she could desire no more than she will have. I told you the first time you came to us after that terrible night that we should always regard you as one of ourselves. We have done so, and I can assure you that her mother and I desire nothing better for her. For your sake I am glad that you have come into this Scottish estate, but for my own I care nothing for it, and, indeed, am in one respect sorry, for you will naturally wish that, for a part of the time each year, she should reside there with you. Now, that has not been so dreadful, has it?"

"Not in any way, Count, and I thank you with all my heart for your kindness. My feeling for your daughter has grown up gradually, and it was not until I was last here that I recognized how much I cared for her. I then, when I went away, resolved it would be better for me not to return, at any rate not to stay here again until I heard that she was married. It is true that I talked of paying you a visit even were Dresden captured, but I knew that when the time came I should be able to find excuses for not doing so. During the time that I was laid up with fever she was ever in my mind, but the necessity for my remaining away from here only impressed itself more and more strongly upon me. Then you appeared and carried me off. I could not refuse to come without giving my reason, but I fully determined that in no way, by look or word, would I allow her to see that I regarded her other than as the daughter of my kind host. I have had a hard fight to keep that resolution, for each day my feelings have grown stronger and stronger, and I had resolved that before I left I would own to you, not my presumption, for I have not presumed, but my weakness, and ask you to press me no more to come here until your daughter was married."

"You have acted just as I should have expected from you, Drummond. The great hope of the countess and myself has been to see Thirza happily married. Fortune or position in a suitor have been altogether immaterial points, excepting that we would assure ourselves that it was not to obtain these that her hand was sought. From the first we have regarded you not only with gratitude, but with deep interest. It seemed to us only natural that after so strange and romantic a beginning to your acquaintance, Thirza should regard you with more than ordinary interest. To her you would be a sort of hero of romance. We watched you closely then, and found that in addition to your bravery you possessed all the

qualities that we could desire. You were modest, frank, and natural. So far from making much of the service you had rendered us, you were always unwilling to speak of it, and when that could not be avoided, you made as little of it as possible.

"I spoke several times of you to Marshal Keith, and he said that he regarded you almost as a son, and spoke in the highest terms of you. We saw, or fancied we saw, in the pleasure which Thirza betrayed when you returned after each of your absences, and in the anxiety which she evinced when battles had taken place, until I could ascertain that your name was not among the lists of killed and wounded, that what we had thought likely was taking place, and that she regarded you with an interest beyond that which would be excited by gratitude only. As to yourself and your thoughts on the subject, we knew nothing. We never saw anything in your manner to her that showed that your heart was affected. You chatted with her as freely and naturally as to us, and even since you have been here this time we have observed no change in you. And yet it seemed to us well-nigh impossible that a young soldier should be thrown so much with a girl who, though it is her father who says so, is exceptionally pretty and of charming manners, and continue to regard her with indifference, unless, indeed, he loved elsewhere, which we were sure in your case could hardly be. I had, however, like yourself, determined to speak on the matter before you left us, as, had you not felt towards her as we hoped, the countess and I agreed that it would be better for her sake that we should not press you to come to stay with us again until she was married. I am truly glad that the matter stands as we had hoped. I can only repeat that there is no one to whom we could intrust her happiness so confidently as to you."

"I will do my best to justify your confidence, Count," Fergus said, warmly.

"Now I will go into the house and tell my wife, and then we can acquaint Thirza. It is the custom here, at least among people of rank, for the parents first to acquaint their daughter with a proposal that has been made for her hand and of their wishes on the subject. Parental control is not carried to the point now that it used to be, and maidens sometimes entertain different opinions to those of their parents. Happily in the present case there is no reason to fear that Thirza will exhibit any contumacy. Fortunately we are alone at dinner to-day, therefore do you come down a quarter of an hour before the usual hour, and we will get the matter formally settled."

When Fergus went into the drawing-room the count was already there.

"Thirza shows no unwillingness to carry out our commands in this matter," he said, with a smile, as he held out his hand to Fergus and shook it very heartily. "I pointed out to her that you would naturally expect her to accompany you every year to Scotland and to spend some months among your people there; she did not seem to consider that any insupportable objection. In one respect, Fergus, I think that it is well for you that I am comparatively a young man, being now but forty-four, while the countess is six years younger; thus it may be a good many years before you will be called upon to assume the control of my estates, and the position of one of the great land-owners of Saxony. One of these estates will of course be Thirza's dowry at once, but that will not tie you so much, and you will be freer to come and go as it pleases you."

Two or three minutes later the door opened and the countess entered leading Thirza by the hand. The girl advanced with downcast eyes until her father stepped forward and took her left hand, while he held the right of Fergus.

"My daughter," he said, "your mother and I have chosen for your husband Colonel Fergus Drummond. We consider the match to be in all ways a suitable one. We esteem him highly, and are convinced that he will make you happy, loving you, as he says, tenderly and truly. In this room where you first saw him, I need not recall to you the services he rendered to us, and I exhort you to obey this our order, and to be a true and loving spouse to him."

The girl looked up now. "That will I, father and mother, and most willingly, and will always to my life's end be a true and loving wife to him."

"Take her, Colonel," the count said, putting her hand into that of Fergus. "You have won your bride fairly and well, and I know that you will be a worthy husband to her."

"That I swear to be," Fergus said, as he stooped and kissed her. "I feel how great is the boon that you have given me, and shall, to my life's end, be deeply thankful to you both for the confidence which you have placed in me, in thus intrusting her to my care. And to you, Thirza, do I swear to be a loving husband to the end of my life."

"And now," the count said, "we will leave these young people till the bell rings," and, taking the countess's hand, he led her into the next room. The ten minutes that passed before the signal for dinner was given, sufficed to do much to lessen the awkwardness of the occasion, and Fergus was heartily grateful to the count for having left them to themselves for that short time. The dinner passed off as usual, the count chatting gaily, while Fergus attempted with indifferent success to follow him. Thirza was very silent, but her cheeks were flushed and her eyes radiant with happiness.

It did not escape the attention of the servants who waited, that instead of, as usual, leading down the countess while the count brought down his daughter, this time the count and his

"TAKE HER, DRUMMOND, YOU HAVE WON YOUR BRIDE FAIRLY AND WELL"

wife had come down first, followed by Fergus and the young countess, nor were they slow to notice Thirza's flushed face. The count's household had been deeply interested in the visits of Fergus. The women had always been unanimous in their opinion that they would all have been murdered by the marauders, had it not been for his interposition, and had also agreed that the most proper thing in the world, after what had happened, would be that the young countess should some day marry this brave young officer. Each time that he had come during the last four years they had watched and hoped that they should hear that this was coming about, but hitherto they had been terribly disappointed, and had almost agreed that if nothing came of this long visit nothing would ever come of it. The news, therefore, brought down by the men-servants excited a lively interest.

"I said all along that it would be so some day!" one of the women exclaimed. "The countess would never have allowed our young lady to be out in the garden every afternoon if she and the count had not been willing that there should be a match, and I am sure I don't see how he could help falling in love with the young countess."

"Nor she with him," another woman added. "He is the pleasantest-looking young gentleman I have ever seen, and we know that he is one of the bravest; and though he is a Prussian officer, there is not a bit of stiffness about him. Well, I only hope it is true."

"I would not count on it too much," one of the older women said. "You never can take men folks' opinions on such matters. I am sure any of us would know with half an eye, if we saw them together, how matters stood; but as for men, they are as blind as bats in such matters. Still, the fact that he took the young countess down instead of our lady goes for something."

The next morning indeed the news was confirmed. The countess told her tire-woman, who had been Thirza's nurse, what had happened, and in a few minutes it was known all over the house, and even the parties most concerned scarcely felt more pleasure than the women of the count's establishment.

CHAPTER XIX

LIEGNITZ

"I HAVE news," the count said, when he came in to lunch, after he had been down into the town; "a messenger has come in with a despatch this morning, saying that the king with his army is marching hither with all speed."

An exclamation of alarm broke from Thirza, and one of surprise from Fergus. They had been in the garden together all the morning.

"It will be but a day or two earlier," Fergus said, in a low tone, to her. "I told you that in three days, at the most, I must leave. The surgeon gave me six weeks, but I have so thoroughly recovered that I feel I ought to be with the king." Then he raised his voice. "That is startling news indeed, Count, but I can hardly believe that he intends to besiege Dresden. He has no siege-guns with him, and though, I suppose, he has as usual got a start of Daun, he can hardly hope to capture the city before the Austrians come up. At any rate, I must ride out and report myself, and join him as soon as he gets close. It is hard indeed at this moment; still, there is no question but that it is my duty."

"I see that, and I am sure that Thirza would not wish to keep you from it. As long as you are a soldier, duty is the

first thing. However, as the king is coming hither, we shall doubtless see you sometimes. As we are half a mile outside the walls, we shall be within the besieging lines."

"I hope that if the king besieges, Count, it will not be on this side, for you might be exposed to shot from the town batteries."

"If we are so, we must move beyond their range and go to our place at Wirzow. That is but twelve miles away; it is a small house, but will do very well for a time."

"I should hope, Count, that there will be no occasion for that. The king cannot hope to lay siege in regular form, though he may try an assault. Slow as Daun is, he must be here within ten days or so of Frederick's arrival, and it is probable that the march here is intended rather to draw Daun away from his Russian allies than with any hope of taking Dresden."

"Will you go this afternoon?"

"I think that I ought to, Count. If the news has come that Frederick is marching to besiege Dresden, he cannot be far away, for it is certain that he will march as fast as he can, and will himself follow closely on the news. 'Tis plain that Lacy feels himself unable to oppose him, and must be falling back with all speed before him. If I were to report myself this evening as convalescent, I can join him to-morrow if I find that he is but a march away."

"I will take you in my carriage as before," the count said. "I can get back here before dark."

Two hours later they started, Thirza consoled to some extent by the assurance that in all probability Fergus would be back again in the course of two or three days. They found that the Austrian advanced posts had already been withdrawn, and experienced no difficulty with the Prussians, so that by five o'clock they arrived at the hospital, the count at once

starting on his return journey. Karl was delighted at seeing his master looking himself again.

"I hardly thought that a month could do so much for you," he said, "especially as you were mending but slowly before you went."

"Yes, I was a poor creature then, Karl, and I did not think myself that I should be really fit for work for some time to come; but at any rate, in such weather as this, I have no fear of breaking down."

Putting on his uniform he went to the principal medical officer, and reported his return and his fitness for duty.

"You have certainly gained strength a great deal faster than I expected, Colonel Drummond. I don't know that you are fit for any really hard work, but I suppose that you will be at least a week before you join the king, and by that time you may be able to do a fair amount of work."

"I fancy I shall join the king to-morrow, Doctor."

"To-morrow?" the surgeon repeated in surprise.

"Yes, sir. Have you not heard the news? The king is marching with all speed this way. I do not know what his intention is—to force Lacy to give battle single-handed before Daun can arrive, or to besiege Dresden; but in the city they believe that they are going to be besieged."

"This is news indeed," the surgeon said. "The scouts brought in word this morning that a considerable force was seen coming along the road from Bautzen. It must be Lacy's army."

"We may be sure that the king is pretty close at his heels," Fergus said. "I have no doubt that by to-morrow morning we shall have news of him, and I fancy that I shall not have far to ride to join him."

The opinion was justified. That evening Lacy joined the Confederate army in their strong position behind the gap of

Plauen. He had been hotly chased, indeed. Frederick had been manœuvring to pass Daun and carry on a campaign in Silesia, but the Austrian general had been too cautious, and it was impossible to pass him without fighting, so on the night of the 8th he left Bautzen suddenly and silently and marched all night, in hopes of catching Lacy at Godau. The latter's Croats, however, brought him news in time, and he at once retreated.

After a short halt the Prussians pressed on for another eighteen miles, capturing some of Lacy's hussars, but failing to come up with his main body, which, marching all that day and the next night, arrived near Dresden on the morning of the 10th, Lacy himself reaching the town the evening before. By Thursday evening the whole of his army had crossed Dresden bridge and got in safely behind Plauen, leaving ten thousand men to aid the four thousand in the garrison. At noon Fergus, hearing that, without doubt, the whole of the enemy had fallen back, started with Karl, and that evening rode into the royal camp and reported himself to the king.

"I am glad to see you back, Drummond," Frederick said, heartily. "I have sorely missed you; and, indeed, when I rode away the accounts of you were so bad that I doubted whether you would ever be able to be with me again. You don't look quite yourself yet, but no doubt the air and exercise will soon bring you round. Have you any news?"

"Lacy has left ten thousand men in Dresden, sire, and with the rest of his force has joined the Confederate army at Plauen."

"Just what I wished," the king said. "It has saved me a long march, and we will now go straight to Dresden."

The next day the army marched forward, circled round the western and southern sides of Dresden, and encamped at Gruna, a mile to the south-east of the city, and throughout

the night laboured at getting up batteries. The division under Holstein was planted on an eminence on the other side of the river, across which a pontoon bridge was at once thrown. There was no fear of disturbance from Lacy, the united force of the enemy having retreated to the old Saxon camp at Pirna. The king, after seeing the batteries marked out, retired to bed early, and Fergus was able to ride round and pay a short visit to the count. On the 14th the batteries opened fire—Maguire having refused the summons to surrender—and continued for four days without making much impression upon the walls, the heaviest guns being only twenty-five pounders.

On the 18th some heavy guns arrived from Magdeburg; the batteries were all ready for them, and as soon as they arrived they were set to work. Maguire burnt the suburbs outside the town, and answered the cannonade hotly. Finding that the guns on the walls did but little damage to the Prussian batteries, Maguire mounted two or three guns on to the leads of the Protestant church, and from this commanding position he was able to throw shot right into them. The Prussian fire was at once concentrated on the church, which was speedily set on fire. This spread through the surrounding streets, and a tremendous conflagration raged for the next forty-eight hours. But by this time Daun, who had lost some days before setting out in pursuit of Frederick, was within five miles of the town, had driven Holstein across the river, and was in communication with Maguire.

On the night of the 21st–22d Maguire's garrison, led by General Nugent, sallied out from Dresden, while four thousand of Daun's men marched round from the north side. For a time the assault on the Prussian intrenchments was successful, although Nugent was, on his first attack, repulsed and taken prisoner; but when Daun's people arrived the regiments defending the trenches were driven out; then fresh battalions

came up and drove the Austrians out, taking many prisoners. Daun remained passive for some days after this, and Frederick continued to cannonade the city until the 29th, making, however, his preparations for departure, and going off unmolested by the enemy towards Meissen.

The news reached him that Glatz, one of the barrier fortresses of Silesia, had been taken by Loudon, and that the latter was besieging Breslau. Daun had guessed the way by which Frederick would retire, and had broken up the roads and bridges, and felled trees in the forests so as to render them impassable, and as soon as Frederick started he moved in the same direction, his position so serving him that, marching by a road parallel to that taken by the king, he was ahead of him. Lacy had been warned to be prepared, and he too started with his army, so that the three forces moved eastward at a comparatively short distance apart. Although hampered by the obstacles in their way and by a train of two thousand waggons, the Prussians moved rapidly and covered a hundred miles in five days.

Daun made what was for him prodigious efforts also, and kept the lead he had gained. On the 7th of August Frederick was thirty miles west of Liegnitz; here he halted for a day, and on the 9th marched to the Katzbach valley, only to find that Daun was securely posted on the other side of the river and Lacy on the hills a few miles off. The next morning Frederick marched down the bank of the Katzbach to Liegnitz, Daun keeping parallel with him on the other side of the river. Knowing that Daun had been joined during the night by Loudon, and that they were vastly too strong to be attacked, Frederick started at eleven at night, and at daybreak was back on his old camping-ground. He crossed the river, hoping to be able to fall upon Lacy, but the latter had moved off, and Frederick, pressing on, would have got fairly ahead of his

enemies if it had not been for the heavy baggage-train, which delayed him for five hours, and by the time it came up he found that Lacy, Daun, and Loudon were all round him again.

The situation seemed desperate; the army had but four days' provisions left, and a scout sent out on the 12th reported that the roads over the hills were absolutely impassable for baggage. At eight o'clock the army set out again, recrossed the Katzbach and again made for Liegnitz, which they reached after a sixteen hours' march. Here the king halted for thirty hours, and his three enemies gathered round him again. They were ninety thousand strong, while he was but thirty. Daun made elaborate reconnaissances, and Frederick had no doubt that he would be attacked that night or early the next morning. After dark the army marched quietly away, and took up its position on the heights of Torberger, its fires being left burning brightly with two drummers to beat occasionally. Daun's and Lacy's fires were clearly visible, but they, like his own, were deserted, both having marched to catch him, as they hoped, asleep at Liegnitz; but it chanced that Loudon had been ordered to take post just where Frederick had halted, and his troops came suddenly upon the Prussians in the dark.

A battalion was despatched at once with some cannon to seize the crest of the Wolfberg. Loudon, whose work was to prevent Frederick from flying eastward, had hurried forward, his scouts having informed him that a number of the Prussian baggage-waggons were passing, and hoped to effect a capture of them; and he was vastly surprised, when, instead of finding the baggage-guard before him, he was received with a tremendous musketry fire and volleys of case-shot. He at once rallied his troops, and with five battalions in front dashed forward. He was repulsed, but returned to the attack three

times. He kept edging round towards the right to take Frederick in flank, but the Prussians also shifted their ground and met him. The Austrian cavalry poured down again, and again, and fresh battalions of infantry were continually brought up.

At last Loudon felt that the contest was hopeless, and fell back across the Katzbach. The Prussians captured six thousand of his men before they could get across the river, four thousand were killed and wounded, and eighty-two cannons captured. Thus his army of thirty-five thousand strong had been wrecked by the Prussian left wing, numbering fifteen thousand, the rest of the Prussian force, under Ziethen, keeping guard lest Daun and Lacy should come on to aid him. Daun, however, was miles away, intent upon catching Frederick, and did not know until morning that his camp had been deserted, and Loudon beaten. As soon as he was assured of this he poured his cavalry across the river, but Ziethen's cannon drove them back again, and he saw that, with Ziethen's standing in order of battle in a commanding position with his guns sweeping the bridges, he could do nothing. Frederick remained four hours on the battle-field, collected five thousand muskets lying on the field, and with the six thousand prisoners, his wounded, and newly captured cannon, marched away at nine o'clock in the morning.

A Russian force of twenty-four thousand still blocked the way; but desirous above all things to effect a junction with Prince Henry, Frederick got rid of them by sending a peasant with instructions to let himself be taken by the Russians.

The slip of paper he carried contained the words:

Austrians totally beaten this day. Now for the Russians, dear brother, and swift. Do what we have agreed upon.

The ruse had its effect. The Russian general, believing that Frederick and Prince Henry were both about to fall upon

him, retreated at once, burning the bridge behind him, and the king pushed on to Breslau, which he reached on the 16th, having, thanks to the wonderful marching of his troops and his own talent, escaped as if by a miracle from what seemed certain destruction.

For a fortnight Frederick remained encamped at a short distance from Breslau, waiting to see what Daun and Soltikoff intended to do. Daun was busy urging the Russians to come on. Soltikoff was sulky that Daun had failed in all his endeavours, and that the brunt of the affair was likely again to fall on him and his Russians.

Elsewhere things had gone more favourably for the king. Ferdinand of Brunswick had now twenty thousand British with him, and fifty thousand Hanoverians and Brunswickers, while the French army under Broglio was one hundred and thirty thousand strong. A check was first inflicted on the French at Korbach, and a few days later an English cavalry regiment and a battalion of Scotch infantry cut up or captured a brigade of French dragoons. On the 29th of July, as Frederick was leaving Dresden, a serious engagement took place at Warburg.

Here Broglio's rear-guard of thirty thousand infantry and cavalry, under the Chevalier du Muy, were attacked in the first place by a free corps called the British Legion, composed of men of many nationalities, who turned Du Muy's right wing out of Warburg. Then the Prince of Brunswick fell upon the whole French line, and the fight was a stubborn one for two or three hours, Maxwell's British brigade fighting most obstinately. They were greatly outnumbered, but were presently joined by Lord Granby at the head of the English cavalry, and these decided the battle.

The French lost fifteen hundred killed, over two thousand prisoners, and their guns; the allies twelve hundred killed and

wounded, of whom eight hundred were British, showing how large a share they had taken in the fighting.

Another good bit of news for Frederick was that Hulsen, whom he had left to watch the enemy in Saxony, had, with ten thousand men, defeated an army thirty thousand strong, who, as they thought, had caught him in a net. The Russians had fallen back, but only to besiege Colbert again. Prince Henry was ill, but Frederick had made a junction with his army, bringing his force up to fifty thousand. During the whole of September there were marches and countermarches, Frederick pushing Daun backwards and preventing him from besieging any of his fortresses, and gradually cutting the Austrians from their magazines. General Werner, on the 18th, with five thousand men, fell suddenly upon fifteen thousand Russians covering the siege of Colbert, defeated and scattered them in all directions; the Russian army at once marched away from Colbert, not, however, as Frederick hoped, back to Poland, but in agreement with Daun to make a rush on Berlin.

One force, twenty thousand strong, crossed the Oder; the main body under Fermor, for Soltikoff had fallen sick, moved to Frankfort, while Lacy, with fifteen thousand, marched from Silesia. On the 3d of October the Russian vanguard reached the neighbourhood of Berlin, and summoned it to surrender and pay a ransom of four million thalers. The garrison of twelve hundred strong, joined by no small part of the male population, took post at the gates and threw up redoubts, and Prince Eugene of Würtemberg, after a tremendous march of forty miles, threw himself into the city. The Russian vanguard drew off, until joined by Lacy. Hulsen, with nine thousand, had followed Lacy with all speed, and managed to throw himself into Berlin before the twenty thousand Russians arrived. There were now fourteen thousand

Prussians in the city, thirty-five thousand Russians and Austrians outside. The odds were too great. Negotiations were therefore begun with the Russian general, Tottleben, and Berlin agreed to pay one million and a half thalers in the debased coin that now served as the medium of circulation.

Lacy was furious, and when he and the Russians marched in, his men behaved so badly that the Russians had two or three times to fire upon them. Saxon and Austrian parties sacked Potsdam and other palaces in the neighbourhood, but the Russians behaved admirably, and so things went on until on October 11th came the news that Frederick was coming. Lacy at once marched off with all speed towards Torgau, while Tottleben and the Russians made for Frankfort-on-Oder, the Cossacks committing terrible depredations on the march. The king halted when he heard that Berlin had been evacuated. He was deeply grieved and mortified that his capital should have been in the hands of the invaders even for three days, and his own loss from the sacking of Potsdam and other palaces was very heavy. However, he paid the ransom from his own pocket, and bitterly determined to get even with the enemy before winter came on.

While Hulsen was away, the Confederate army had captured all the strongholds in Saxony. Daun had, as usual, advanced with his sixty thousand men and intended to winter in Saxony, but before he could get there Frederick had dashed south and recaptured Wittenberg and Leipzig, crossed the Elbe, and driven the scattered corps of the Confederate army before him. Prince Eugene had also hurried that way and defeated his brother, the reigning Duke of Würtemberg. Daun moved with the intention of aiding the Confederate army, but before he could reach them Hulsen had driven them across the mountain range into Bohemia and fell back towards Torgau.

Long before this Fergus had received a reply from his mother to his letter, announcing the glad news of the restoration of the estate:

It will be doubly dear to me, she said, *as having been won back by your own exertions and bravery. These four years have been an anxious time indeed for me, Fergus, but the thought that you are restored to your own, as the result of what you have done, makes up for it all. I quite see that as long as the war continues you cannot with honour leave the king, but I cannot think that this war will go on very much longer, and I can wait patiently for the end; and, Fergus, I am not quite sure that the end will be that you will quietly settle down in the glens. A mother's eye is sharp, and it seems to me that that young countess near Dresden is a very conspicuous figure in your letters. During the four years that you have been out you have not mentioned the name of any lady but her and her mother, and you always speak of going back there as if it were your German home.*

That is natural enough after the service that you have rendered them; still, 'tis strange that you should apparently have made the acquaintance of no other ladies. I don't think that you have written a single letter since you have been away in which you have not said something about this Saxon count and his family. However, even if it should be so, Fergus, I should not be discontented. It is only natural that you should sooner or later marry, and although I would rather that it had been into a Scotch family, it is for you to choose, not me. I am grateful already, very grateful for the kindness the family have shown you, and am quite inclined to love this pretty young countess, if she, on her part, is inclined to love you. I don't think I could have said so quite as heartily before I received your last letter, for I had a great fear that you might marry and settle down altogether in Germany; but now that the es-

tate is yours, and you are the head of your clan, I feel sure that you will at any rate spend a part of your time among your own people.

A second letter reached Fergus at the beginning of October, in answer to his from the camp in front of Dresden in the middle of July, which had been delayed much on its way, owing to the rapid marches of the army until it had shaken itself free from its pursuers after the battle of Liegnitz.

It began:

I congratulate you, my dear Fergus, congratulate you with all my heart, and if there is just a shadow of regret that you should not have married and settled here entirely, it is but a small regret in proportion to the pleasure I feel. It is not even reasonable, for when I consented to your going abroad to take service in Prussia, I knew that this would probably end in your settling down there altogether, for it was hardly likely that you could win a fortune that would admit of your coming back to live here.

Of course, had your estate at that time been restored to you, you would probably not have gone at all, or if you had done so, it would have been but to stay for a few years, and see service under your cousin Keith, and then return to live among your own people. As it was, there was no reason why you should greatly wish to return to Scotland, where you were landless, with no avenues open to employment. However, what you tell me, that the count and countess are willing that you should spend some months here every year, is far better than I could have expected or even hoped, and, as you may imagine, quite reconciles me to the thought of your marrying abroad. In all other respects nothing could be more satisfactory than what you tell me. Your promised wife must be a charming young lady, and her father and mother the kindest of people.

Of course your worldly prospects will be vastly beyond anything that even my wildest dreams have ever pictured for you, and in this respect all my cares for you are at an end. It will be delightful indeed to look forward to your home-coming every year, and I consider myself in every way a fortunate woman. I am sure that I shall come to love your Thirza very dearly. The only question is, when is the first visit to take place? Everyone says that it does not seem that the war can go on very much longer, and that wonderful as the king's resistance to so many enemies has been, it cannot continue. However, from what you say of his determination and the spirit of the people, I cannot think that the end can be so near as people think.

They have been saying nearly the same thing for the last three years, and yet, though everything seemed as dark as possible, he always extricated himself somehow from his difficulties. Besides, his enemies must at last get tired of a war in which, so far, they have had more defeats than victories, and have lavished such enormous sums of money. France has already impoverished herself, and Russia and Austria must feel the strain too. In every church here prayers are offered for the success of the champion of Protestantism, and I am sure that if he had sent Scottish officers, as Gustavus Adolphus did, to raise troops in Scotland, he could have obtained forty or fifty thousand men in a very few weeks, so excited is everyone over the struggle. You would be surprised what numbers of people have called upon me to congratulate me upon your rising to be a colonel in Frederick's army, people I have never seen before; and I can assure you that I never felt so important a person, even before the evil days of Culloden. When you come back the whole country-side will flock to give you welcome.

This letter was a great comfort to Fergus. That his mother would rejoice at his good fortune he knew, but he feared that

his marriage with a German lady, whatever her rank, would be a sore disappointment to her, not so much perhaps for her own sake as for that of the clansmen.

The English ambassador was no longer with the army. At the fierce fight of Liegnitz he had been with Frederick, but had passed the night in his carriage, which was jammed up among the baggage-waggons, and had been unable to extricate himself or to discover how the battle was going on. Several times the Austrian cavalry had fallen upon the baggage, and had with great difficulty been beaten off by its guard, and the discomforts of the time and the anxiety through which he had gone so unhinged him that he was unable to follow Frederick's rapid movements throughout the rest of the campaign. Fergus had confided to Earl Marischal Keith, later, his engagement to the Count Eulenfurst's daughter.

"You are a lucky young dog, Fergus," he said. "My brother and I came abroad too late for any young countess to fall in love with us. There is nothing like taking young to the business of soldiering abroad. Bravery is excellent in its way, but youth and bravery combined with good looks are irresistible to the female mind. I am heartily glad that one of our kin should have won something more than six feet of earth by his sword. Count Eulenfurst is one of the few men everyone speaks well of. There is no man in Saxony who stands higher. In any other country he would have been the leading statesman of his time, but the wretched king, and his still more wretched minister, held in disfavour all who opposed their wanton extravagance and their dangerous plans.

"It is an honour indeed to be connected with such a family, putting aside all question of money; but indeed in this respect nothing could be more satisfactory. His daughter is the sole heiress of his wide estates, and as her husband you will have a splendid position. I am very glad, lad, that the count

has no objection to your passing a portion of your time in Scotland. They say, you know, that much as Scotchmen boast of their love of their country, they are always ready to leave it to better themselves, and that it is very seldom they ever return to it. Such was unhappily the case with my brother, such will probably be the case with myself, but I am glad that you will be an exception, and that you will still keep up your connection with your old home.

"I hope, lad, that you will have more than one son. The first, of course, will make Saxony his home, but bring up the second as a Scotchman, send him home to be educated, and let him succeed you in the glens. If he has the family instinct for fighting let him go into the British army, he can go into no better, but let your people have someone who will be their own laird, and whose interests will be identified with their own."

Fergus smiled at the old man's earnestness.

"That is rather looking ahead, sir," he said. "However, it is certainly what I should like to do myself; and if, as you say, I have more than one son, I will certainly give the second the training you suggest, and make a Scotchman of him. Certainly, if he has fighting instincts, he will see that he will have more opportunities of active service in the British army than he could have in that of Saxony, which has been proved unable to stand alone, and can only act as a small ally to either Prussia or Austria. Even putting aside my nationality, I would rather be fighting under Clive in India than in any service in the world, even in that of Prussia."

"You are right, lad. Since the days of Marlborough people have begun to think that the British were no longer a fighting people, but the way in which they have wrested Canada from the French and achieved marvels in India, to say nothing of the conduct of their infantry at Minden, shows that

the qualities of the race are unchanged, and some day they will astonish the world again, as they have done several times in their history."

The king soon heard the news from the earl, and one evening said to Fergus, "So, as the Earl Marischal tells me, you have found time, Colonel Drummond, for love-making. I thought that day I went to express my regrets for the outrage that had been committed at Count Eulenfurst's, that it would make a pretty romance if the young lady who received me should take a fancy to you, which was not altogether unlikely after the gallant manner in which you had saved them all from those rascals of mine, and when you told me at Dresden that they had been nursing you the idea again occurred to me. Well, I am glad you have done so well for yourself. As a king I rejoice that one who has fought so bravely should obtain a meet reward, and as one who dabbles in poetry, the romance of the thing is very pleasant to me; but I am not to lose your services, I hope?"

"No, sire; so long as the war goes on I shall continue to serve your Majesty to the best of my powers."

The king nodded. "It is what I should have expected from one of Marshal Keith's relations," he said; "but it is not everyone who would care to go on leading this dog's life when a pretty and well-endowed bride is awaiting him. However, it cannot last much longer. The crisis must come erelong. If we can defeat Daun, it may be put off for a time; if we are beaten, I do not see that I can struggle longer against fate. With Berlin already in their hands, with the country denuded of men and almost exhausted in means, with the Russian and Austrian armies already planted on Prussian soil, I can do no more if I lose another great battle."

"We must hope that it will not be so, sire. The spirit of the soldiers is as high as ever, and now that they will be fight-

ing nearly within sight of their homes, they can be trusted to achieve almost impossibilities."

"The men are good men," the king said, "and if I had Keith and Schwerin by my side I should feel more hopeful; but they are gone, and there are none to fill their places. My brother Henry is a good soldier, but he is over-cautious; Seidlitz has not recovered from his wounds; Hulsen has done well of late, and has shown wonderful energy, considering that he is an old man. But there are none of them who are at once prudent when it behoved them to be prudent, and quick to strike when they see an opening, like Schwerin and Keith.

"Ziethen is a splendid cavalry officer, but he is fit to command cavalry only, and the whole burden falls upon my shoulders, which are getting too old to bear so heavy a weight."

"I trust, sire, that they will not have to bear the burden much longer. Just at present Russia and Austria are doubtless encouraged by success, but the strain must be heavy on them also, and another defeat might well cause them to doubt whether it is worth while to continue to make sacrifices that produce such small results."

"Heaven grant that it may be so," the king said, earnestly. "God knows that I never wanted this war, and that from the day it began I have eagerly grasped every chance that presented itself of making peace, short of the dismemberment of my kingdom. I would at this moment willingly accede to any terms, however onerous, in order to secure peace for my country."

CHAPTER XX

TORGAU

AFTER many marches and quick blows at the Confederate armies, and driving them beyond the borders of Saxony, Frederick moved towards Torgau, where Daun had established himself in a position that he deemed impregnable. It had been Prince Henry's camp during the previous autumn, and Daun had in vain beleaguered it. Hulsen had made it his head-quarters during the summer. Torgau was an old-fashioned town, surrounded by tracts of pine-wood, with pleasant villages and much well-cultivated land. The town rose above the Elbe, on the shoulder of a broad eminence called the Siptitz. This height stands nearly a mile from the river; on the western and southern side of the town are a series of lakes and quagmires, the remains of an old course of the Elbe. Set on Siptitz's heights was Daun's camp, girt about by intrenchments. The hill was mostly covered with vineyards; its height was some two hundred feet above the general level of the country, and its area some five or six square miles.

Covered as its flanks were by heights, woods, ponds, and morasses, the position was an extremely strong one, so much so that Daun had not ventured to attack Prince Henry though in vastly superior force, and still more difficult was it for Frederick to do so, when held by an army greatly superior to his own, for the Austrian force numbered sixty-five thousand, while the king, after being joined by all his detachments, had but forty-four thousand. Nothing indeed but the most urgent necessity could have driven the king to attempt so difficult an enterprise.

His plan was to attack it simultaneously in front and rear,

and to do this he decided that half the force, under Ziethen, should attack the Siptitz hill on the south side, while he himself with the other half was to make a long detour and assault it at the same moment on the north.

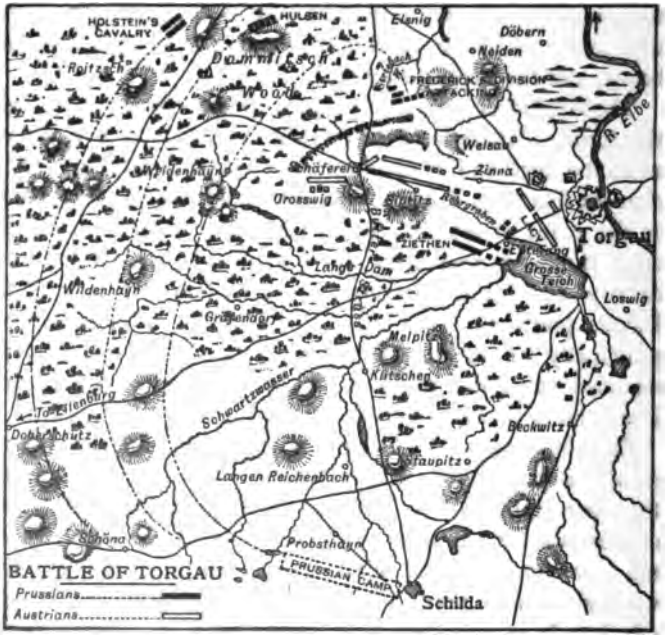
Frederick's march was some fifteen miles in length, while Ziethen had but six to traverse, and as the route was through forests, the difficulties in the way of the two columns arriving at their point of attack simultaneously were great indeed, and were increased by the fact that the weather was wet, the ground heavy, and the streams swollen.

The king's force marched in three columns by roads through the forest. There were no villages here, no one to question as to the turns and branchings of roads, thus adding to the chances that even Frederick's force would not arrive together at the point of attack. Frederick's own column contained eight thousand grenadiers and foot guards, with a force of cavalry, and his line of march was by the road nearest to Daun's position. Two other columns, Hulsen's, composed principally of infantry, and Holstein's, chiefly of cavalry, marched on parallel roads on a wider circle, and the baggage, in a column by itself, outside all.

Daun had news of Frederick's approach, and had strong detachments watching in the woods. The scouts of one of these parties brought in news of the king's march. A signal cannon was fired immediately, and Daun learned thereby of the movement to attack him from the north. Daun at once wheeled round a portion of his force to receive Frederick's attack. Lacy, with twenty thousand men, had been placed as an advanced guard, and now shifted his position westward to guard what had become Daun's rear, while two hundred fresh cannon were added to the two hundred already placed to defend the face threatened by Frederick. For an hour before the king arrived at his point of attack a heavy artillery

fire had been heard from Ziethen's side, and it was supposed that he had already delivered his attack.

Unfortunately he had not done so. He had calculated his pace accurately, but had come upon a small Austrian force like those Frederick had encountered. It had for a time held its ground, and had replied to his fire with cannon. Ziethen,



not knowing how small the force was, drew up in order of battle and drove it back on Lacy, far to the east of his proper place of attack. Here he became engaged with Lacy, and a cannonade was kept up for some hours, precious time that should have been spent in ascending the hills and giving aid to the king.

When Frederick's column emerged from the woods there was no sign of either Hulsen or Holstein's divisions. The king sent out his staff to hurry them up, and himself reconnoitred the ground and questioned the peasants. The ground proved so boggy as to be impassable, and Frederick withdrew into the wood again in order to attack the Austrian left. This had in Prince Henry's time been defended by a strong abattis, but since the cold weather set in much of this had been used by the Austrians as firewood, and it could therefore be penetrated. Frederick waited impatiently. He could hear the heavy cannonade on Ziethen, and feared that that general would be crushed before he could perform his part of the plan arranged.

His staff were unable to find Holstein's cavalry, which had taken the wrong turning at some point, and were completely lost. Hulsen was still far away. Nevertheless, in his desire to give support to Ziethen, the king decided upon an attack with his own column alone. The grenadiers were placed in the front line; the rest of the infantry in the centre; the cavalry, 800 strong, followed to do any service that chance might afford them. It took some time to bring the troops into their new position, and while this was being done Daun opened fire with his four hundred cannon upon the forest through which they were marching, with a din that Frederick declared exceeded anything that he ever heard before.

The small force of artillery took its place outside the wood to cover the attack, but before a single shot could be fired the Austrian guns opened upon them and they were silenced. Frederick's place was between the two lines of his grenadiers, and they issued from the wood within eight hundred yards of Prince Henry's abattis, and with marvellous bravery ran forward. Mowed down in lines by the storm of cannon-shot, they suffered terribly. One regiment was almost entirely de-

stroyed, the other pressed forward as far as the abattis, fighting so desperately that Daun was obliged to bring up large reinforcements before he could drive the survivors back. The Austrians, believing that victory was won, charged down in pursuit, but the second line met them firmly, drove them back, and, following hotly, again reached the abattis, and only retreated slowly before the overwhelming forces which the Austrian then brought up.

The battle had lasted only an hour, but half Frederick's column were already killed or wounded. Shortly after they had retired Hulsen's column came up. The four hundred guns had never ceased pouring their iron rain into the forest, but the new-comers arrived in splendid order. The remnant of Frederick's column joined them, furious at defeat, and burning to meet the enemy again. So stern and resolute was the attack that for a time it carried all before it. Daun's line of defence was broken, most of his cannon silenced, and for a time the Prussians advanced, carrying all before them. Had Ziethen been doing his part, instead of idly cannonading Lacy, the battle would have been won, but his inactivity enabled Daun to bring up all his forces against the king. These he hurled at the Prussians, and foot by foot drove them back and pushed them down the hill again.

Frederick himself had been struck from his horse by a piece of case-shot, fortunately almost spent, and which failed to penetrate his thick pelisse. He was badly contused, and for a short time insensible, but he quickly sprung to his feet again, mounted his horse, and maintained his place in the fight as if nothing had happened. After this second repulse he again formed up his troops, and at that moment he was joined by Holstein with his cavalry. The sun had already set, and the darkness favoured the attack. Daun had not yet recovered from the terrible confusion into which his troops were thrown

by the attack, and the Prussians again mounted the hill, Holstein attacking Daun's right wing.

The main body of the cavalry found the morasses and obstacles so impracticable that they were unable to attack as arranged, but two regiments succeeded in gaining the plateau. One of these dashed upon the Austrian infantry. They met, broke into fragments, and took two whole regiments prisoners, and brought them and six guns triumphantly off. The other regiment charged four Austrian battalions, broke them, and brought the greater portion off prisoners.

Night fell upon a scene of general confusion. The two armies were completely mixed up. In some places Austrians were in the rear of the Prussians, in others Prussians in the rear of Austrians.

Nothing more could be done. So far Frederick had gained a success, and thanks to the extraordinary bravery and determination of his soldiers, had broken up Daun's line, and planted himself on the plateau, but he had suffered terribly in doing so, and could hardly hope in the morning to make head against the vastly superior forces of the Austrians.

Daun himself had been wounded in the foot, and had gone down to the town to have it dressed. Had he been able to remain on the field, late as it was, he might have been able to restore order, and to continue the battle; as it was, gradually the firing ceased. Exhausted by the long march and the desperate efforts they had made, the Prussians wrapped themselves in their cloaks and lay down to sleep where they stood, if sleep they could on so bitterly cold a night. On the hill-top there was no wood to be had, but in the forest great fires were lighted. Round these Prussian and Austrian stragglers alike gathered. In the morning they would be foes again, but for to-night they were content to lay their quarrel aside,

none knowing who was victor and who vanquished, and which in the morning would be prisoners to the others.

The king, now that the excitement was over, felt the pain of his wound. He descended the hill and took up his quarters in the church at the little village of Elsnig, where every house was full of wounded. He had left Hulsen the charge of endeavouring to re-form the scattered troops, but he could do but little that way. In vain did the generals and officers move about with orders, expostulations, and threats. For once the Prussian soldier was deaf to the word of command. He had done all that he could do, and nature triumphed over long habits of obedience; even the sound of cannon and musketry, on the other side of the hill, fell dead upon his ears. Ziethen had been cannonading all day, nothing had come of it, and nothing could come of it.

Still Hulsen did a good deal, and by six o'clock had got some of the cavalry and infantry battalions in fair order on the extreme right, where in the morning Daun's left flank stood.

Ziethen, ordinarily a brilliant and active man, had been a strange failure that day, not even the terrible din of the king's battle had roused him to take any measure to support him, or even to make a diversion in his favour. In vain Mollendorf, an active and enterprising general, had implored him to attempt something, if only to draw off a portion of the Austrian strength from the king. Saldern, another general, had fruitlessly added his voice to that of Mollendorf. A feeling of deep gloom spread through the army, a feeling that the king had been deserted, and must have been crushed, just as on the other side all felt certain that some serious misfortune must have happened to Ziethen. At last, as darkness began to set in, at four o'clock, Ziethen was persuaded to move. He marched towards the left to the point where he should have attacked in the morning, but which he had

passed in his hot pursuit of the small Austrian force, but first sent Saldern against the village of Siptitz.

Burning with their repressed impatience, Saldern's infantry went at the enemy with a rush, captured the battery there, and drove the Austrians out; but the latter fired the bridge, so that for the present farther advance was barred to the Prussians. Fortunately at this moment Mollendorf, more to the west, came upon the road by which Ziethen should have marched. It was carried firmly over the marsh ground, and by a bridge over a stream between two of the ponds. Seizing this pass over the morasses, Mollendorf sent to Ziethen, who, roused at last, ordered all his force to hurry there. The Austrians had now taken the alarm and hurried to oppose the passage, but Mollendorf had already many troops across the bridge, and maintained himself till he was sufficiently reinforced to push forward.

For an hour and a half a desperate fight raged. The Prussians gained but little ground, while the Austrians were constantly being reinforced from Lacy's command on their left. Hulsen, however, just as he had got a portion of his infantry and cavalry into some sort of order, had marked the sudden increase of the cannonade on the other side of the hill, and, presently seeing the glow of a great fire, guessed that it must come from the village of Siptitz; then came a furious cannonade and the continuous roar of musketry that spoke of a battle in earnest. Ziethen, then, was coming at last, and the old general determined to help him. His own riding horses had all been killed, and he had been sorely bruised by the falls. Sending for a cannon, he got astride of it, called up the infantry round him, the brigade of General Lestwitz, begged the drummers to strike up the Prussian march, and through the blackness of the night started for the point where the din of battle was going on unceasingly.

Forgotten now were the fatigues of the day; the Prussians pressed on with their quick strides, their excitement growing higher and higher as they neared the scene of action, and breaking out into a roar of cheering as, sweeping round on the side of the hill, they joined Ziethen's hardly pressed troops, and rushed upon the enemy. But though the news of their coming cheered all the line to fresh exertions, not yet was the combat finished, the whole of Lacy's command was opposed to them, swelled by reinforcements sent down from above by O'Donnel, who in Daun's absence was in command. It was another hour before the foe gave way, and the Prussians pressed steadily up the hill, until at nine o'clock they were planted on the top of the Siptitz hill, on the highest point of the plateau, whence their cannon commanded the whole ground down to Torgau.

Daun, conscious of the danger, had, as he heard of Ziethen's advance, sent order after order that he must at all costs be driven back; and even when the Prussians gained the position, they had still to struggle fiercely for another hour to hold it. Daun knew that, with Frederick established on one side of the position, and with Ziethen well planted upon the other and commanding the whole of it with his guns, there was nothing for it but to retreat, and already he had sent orders that a strong force should form in order of battle to repel an attack, close to the suburbs of Torgau. As soon as this disposition was effected he ordered the retreat to commence.

Fortunately he had four bridges across the river, and he had on the previous day taken the precaution of sending the whole of his baggage-waggons over. On occasions of this kind Daun's dispositions were always admirable, and he drew off his army across the river in excellent order, half the Prussian army knowing nothing of what was going on, and the

other half being too exhausted to attempt to interfere, ignorant as they were of the position and state of Frederick's division. Had the king known earlier what was taking place, comparatively few of the Austrian army would have got across the river. But it was not until long after the battle was done that Frederick, sitting depressed and heavy-hearted, dictating his despatches in the little church seven or eight miles away, learned that what had seemed likely to terminate in a terrible disaster had ended with a decisive victory.

Daun lost in the battle twelve thousand killed and wounded, eight thousand prisoners, and forty-five cannon, while the Prussians lost between thirteen and fourteen thousand, of whom four thousand were prisoners.

It was not until nearly one o'clock in the morning that Ziethen learned that the Austrians were already across the river. Then he pushed down into Torgau and crossed the town bridge in time to capture twenty-six pontoons.

Daun retreated by the right side of the river, Lacy by the left, and the two forces rejoined at Dresden and took up their position as usual in the Plauen stronghold; while Frederick, after finishing the clearance of all Saxony save the capital, took up his winter quarters at Leipzig on the 6th of December.

The result of the battle of Torgau was not to be measured by the respective losses of the two armies; it had the effect of entirely undoing all the advantages that the Austrians had gained throughout the campaign, and left the king in a better position than when it opened in the spring. The Russian army had been attacked and beaten, while the Austrians were shut up in their natural stronghold near Dresden. The whole of Saxony had been recovered, and Silesia, with the exception of one or two fortresses, was still in Frederick's hands. How light-hearted the king felt, after the load of care that had lain upon him had been lifted, may be judged by an extract from

a letter written a fortnight after the battle to an elderly lady of the Court at Magdeburg:

I am exact in answering, and eager to satisfy you (in that matter of the porcelain). You shall have a breakfast set, my good Mamma: six coffee-cups, very pretty, well diapered, and tricked out with all the little embellishments which increase their value. On account of some pieces which they are adding to the set, you will have to wait a few days; but I flatter myself this delay will contribute to your satisfaction, and produce for you a toy that will give you pleasure, and make you remember your old adorer. It is curious how old people's habits agree. For four years past I have given up suppers as incompatible with the trade I am obliged to follow; and on marching days my dinners consist of a cup of chocolate.

We hurried off, like fools, quite inflated with our victory, to try if we could not chase the Austrians out of Dresden; they made a mockery of us from the tops of their mountains. So I have withdrawn, like a bad little boy, to conceal myself, out of spite, in one of the wretchedest villages in Saxony. And here the first thing will be to drive the Circle gentlemen (Reich's army) out of Freyberg into Chemnitz, and get ourselves soon to quarters and something to live upon. It is, I swear to you, a hideous life, the like of which nobody but Don Quixote ever led before me. All this tumbling and toiling, and bother and confusion that never ceases, has made me so old that you would scarcely know me again.

On the right side of my head the hair is all gray; my teeth break and fall out; I have got my face wrinkled like the falbalas of a petticoat, my back bent like a fiddle-bow; and spirit sad and cast-down like a monk of La Trappe. I forewarn you of all this, lest, in case we should meet again in flesh and bone, you might feel yourself too violently shocked by my appearance.

"AS FERGUS FELL FROM HIS HORSE, KARL, WHO WAS RIDING BEHIND HIM, LEAPT FROM HIS SADDLE"

There remains to me nothing but the heart, which has undergone no change, and which will preserve, as long as I breathe, its feelings of esteem and of tender friendship for my good Mamma. Adieu.

Fergus knew nothing of the concluding scènes of the battle of Torgau until some little time afterwards. He was not with the king when the grenadiers first made their attack on the hill, having been despatched to find and bring up Hulsen's column. Having discovered it, he guided it through the forest to the point where Frederick was so anxiously expecting its arrival, and when it advanced with the survivors of the grenadiers to the second attack, he took his place behind the king. They were half-way up the ascent when a cannon-ball struck him on the left arm, carrying it away just above the elbow.

As he fell from his horse, Karl, who was riding behind him, leapt from his saddle with a hoarse cry of rage; then seeing the nature of the wound, he lifted him in his arms, mounted Fergus's horse, and rode down through an interval between the regiments of the second line, and then into the wood to the spot where the surgeons were dressing the wounds of those hurt in the first charge. One who had just finished attending one of the grenadiers, seeing that the trooper was carrying a colonel of the king's staff, at once helped Karl to lower him to the ground.

"You have done well to bring him down at once, my man," he said; "it may be the saving of his life."

As he spoke he was cutting off the tunic.

"There is not much flow of blood; you see the contusion has closed the main artery. If we can keep it from bursting out, he will do." He took out from his case some stout tape, passed it round the arm, asked Karl for a ramrod out of one

of his pistols, and with this twisted the tape until it almost cut into the skin; then he gave a few more turns to hold the ramrod securely in its place, then he called a young surgeon to him.

"We had better make a good job of this at once," he said. "This is Colonel Drummond, one of the king's favourite officers, and a most gallant young fellow. It will not take us five minutes." The artery was first found and tied up, for Prussian surgery was at that time far ahead of our own. The bruised flesh was pressed up, the bone cut off neatly above the point where it was splintered, the flesh brought down again over it and trimmed, then several thicknesses of lint put over it, and the whole carefully bandaged up. "There," he said to Karl, as he rose from his work, "that is all that I can do for him, and unless it bursts out bleeding again, he is likely to do well. If it does, you must tighten that tape still more. All there is to do is to keep him as quiet as possible. Have you any spirits?"

"Yes, Doctor, there is a flask in his holster."

"Mix some with as much water, and pour a little down his throat from time to time. Fold his cloak and put it under his head; he will probably recover consciousness in a short time. When he does so impress upon him the necessity of lying perfectly quiet. As soon as the battle is over we must get him moved into shelter."

In half an hour Fergus opened his eyes. Karl, who was kneeling by him, placed one hand on his chest and the other on the wounded arm.

"You must not move, Colonel," he said. "You have been hit, but the doctor says you will get over it; but you must lie perfectly still."

Fergus looked round in bewilderment, then as the roar of the battle came to his ears he made an instinctive effort to rise.

"It is going on still," Karl said, repressing the movement. "We shall thrash them presently; but you can do nothing more to-day, and you must do as the doctor bids you, sir."

"Where am I hit?"

"It is on the left arm, Colonel. An Austrian cannon-ball did the business. If it had been three or four inches farther to the right it would have finished you. As it is I hope that you will soon get about again."

"Then it has taken off my arm," Fergus said, feebly.

"Better that than your head, sir. The left arm is of no great account except for holding a bridle, and there is a good bit of it left. Drink a little more of this brandy and water. How do you feel now, sir?"

"I feel cold," Fergus replied. "My feet are like ice."

Karl wrapped Fergus's fur-lined pelisse round his feet, undid his blanket and cloak from his saddle and laid them over him.

"That will be better, sir. Now, if you will promise to lie quite quiet I will fasten your horse up—I don't know what has become of mine—and will go and collect some fire-wood and get up a good blaze. I am afraid there is no chance of getting you into a shelter to-night."

"I am afraid we are being driven down the hill again, Karl. The roll of musketry is coming nearer."

"That is so, Colonel; but we shall have the cavalry up soon, and that will make all the difference."

Just as Karl came back with an armful of fire-wood a staff-officer rode up.

"The king has sent me to inquire how Colonel Drummond is," he said. "His Majesty has heard that he is badly wounded and has been carried here."

"This is the colonel, Major," Karl said, leading him to the side of Fergus.

"I am sorry to see you here," the officer said. "The king has sent me to inquire after you."

"Will you thank his Majesty, Major Kaulbach, and tell him that it is nothing worse than the loss of a left arm, and that the surgeon's opinion is that I shall do well. How goes the battle?"

"Badly, badly; but Holstein will be up in a quarter of an hour, and then we shall have another try. We broke their line badly last time, and if we had had cavalry to launch at them we should have managed the business."

"The king is unhurt, I hope."

"Not altogether. He was struck from his horse by a piece of case-shot, but his pelisse saved him. He was able to mount again in a few minutes, making very light of the affair, and was in the middle of the fight as usual. I was next you when you were hit, and I saw your orderly lift you onto your horse before him, and as soon as we got down here, reported it to the king."

"Our loss must be terribly heavy."

"Terrible! There is no saying how severe it is yet; but not half the grenadiers are on their feet. There is nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing at all. My orders are to lie still, and as I feel too weak to move, and there is no one to carry me away, and nowhere to take me to, I am not likely to disobey the order."

The officer rode off again. Karl soon had a fire lighted sufficiently close to Fergus for him to feel its warmth. Wounded men, who had made their way down the hill, came and sat down on the other sides of it. Many other fires were lighted as it grew dusk. In front the battle had broken out again as furiously as ever, and erelong wounded men began to come down again. They brought cheering news, however. The Prussians were still pressing forward, the cavalry had

thrown the Austrian line into terrible confusion. No one knew exactly where any of the Prussian battalions had got to, but all agreed that things were going on well.

At five o'clock the roar gradually ceased, and soon all was quiet. The wounded now came in fast, but none could say whether the battle was won or lost, for the night was so dark that each could only speak of what had happened to his own corps. Presently the number round the fires was swelled by the arrival of numerous Austrians, wounded and unwounded. Most of these laid their rifles by, saying, "It is a bitter night, comrades; will you let us have a share of the fire?"

"Come in, come in," the Prussians answered, "we are all friends for to-night, for we are all in equally bad plight. Can you tell us how matters have gone up there?"

But these knew no more than the Prussians. They had got separated from their corps in the confusion, and losing their way altogether, had seen the glow of the fires in the forest, and had come down for warmth and shelter.

Presently Major Kaulbach rode up again.

"How have things gone, Major?" Fergus asked, eagerly.

"No one knows," he said. "The Austrians are broken up, and our battalions and theirs are so mixed that there is no saying where they are, or how matters will stand in the morning. The king has gone to Elsnig, two or three miles away."

"Is there no news of Ziethen?"

"None; they have just begun to fire heavily again in that direction, but what he has been doing all day no one has any idea."

But little was said round the fires. A short distance away the surgeons were still at work with the more serious cases, while the soldiers roughly bandaged each other's wounds; but as gradually the distant firing increased in fury, and seemed

to grow in distinctness, men who had lain down sat up to listen. There was no longer any talking, and a hush fell upon the forest.

"It is certainly coming closer, Colonel," Karl said at last. "It seems that Ziethen has woke up in earnest. May the good God grant that he win his way up onto the heights."

"If he does we shall have the Austrians in the morning, if he doesn't we shall have a poor chance with them."

"I am afraid we sha'n't, Colonel; but it certainly sounds as if Ziethen was making way."

At nine o'clock a cavalry officer came riding along. He drew rein at the fire. "Can anyone tell me where I can find the king?"

"He is at Elsnig, Captain," Karl said, rising and saluting. "May I ask what is the news, sir?"

"The news is good; Ziethen has gained the heights. We can see the flash of fire round the Siptitz hill."

A cheer broke from all the Prussians within hearing. There was not a man but knew that the fate of Prussia hung on the result of this battle, and for the moment wounds were forgotten, men shook hands with tears of joy streaming down their rugged cheeks; and as others came running up from the other fires to know what was the news, and then hurried off again to tell their companions, the forest rang with their cheering. All was not over yet. For a time the firing was louder and heavier than before, but towards ten o'clock news came that Ziethen was firmly established on the Siptitz hill, and that the Austrian battalions were drawing off. Then all lay down to sleep, rejoiced and thankful; and even the Austrians, disconcerted as they were, were not altogether sorry that they must now consider themselves prisoners and free for a long time to come from further risk of battle.

The news in the morning that the Austrian army had

already crossed the river and was in full retreat southwards, afforded the most intense satisfaction. There was now a hope of shelter and rest in Torgau, instead of the prospect of remaining in the forest drenched to the skin by the rain that had come down without intermission for the last twenty-four hours. An hour later Major Kaulbach again rode up accompanied by four infantry men bearing a stretcher.

"The king has already gone on to Torgau, and he has given me orders to see that you are carried there at once. There will be no more fighting at present. Daun has got a long start, and there will be enough to do here for the next twelve hours in collecting the wounded. Lacy has retreated this side of the river, and Ziethen's cavalry started in pursuit some hours ago."

Fergus was carefully lifted on to the litter and carried down to Torgau, where several large houses had already been assigned for the use of wounded officers, while the soldiers were to be placed in the hospitals, public buildings, and churches, Austrians and Prussians being distributed indiscriminately, and by nightfall some twelve thousand wounded were housed in the town.

A small body of troops was left there; the inhabitants undertook the charge of the wounded, and the next morning the king marched away south with the army. Soon after Fergus was brought in, Frederick paid a visit to the house where he had been carried, and said a few words to each of the wounded officers.

"So you are down again, Drummond. Fortune is not treating you so favourably as she used to do."

"It might have been a good deal worse, your Majesty. I think that one who has got off with only the loss of his left arm has no reason to complain."

"No, it might have been worse," the king replied. "I have

lost many good friends and thousands of brave soldiers. However, I too must not complain, for it has saved Prussia. Don't hurry to rejoin too soon, Drummond. Another month and we shall all be in winter quarters."

CHAPTER XXI

HOME

FERGUS remained at Torgau for six weeks. He had, two days after the battle, sent Karl off to carry a letter to Thirza, telling her that he had been wounded, but that she need have no uneasiness about him, the surgeon saying that the wound was going on well, and that, should it not break out bleeding in the course of another week, he would make a quick cure, and would be fit for service again long before the spring. Karl had not found his horse again, but had bought for a trifle an Austrian officer's horse that was found riderless and had become the prize of a trooper, who was glad to part with it at a quarter of its value. He took with him the disguise of a countryman to put on when he approached the ground held by the Austrians near Dresden, and, leaving his horse fifteen miles away, had no difficulty in making his way in on foot. Karl went round to the back of the house. The servants recognized him as soon as he entered.

"Will one of you ask the count to see me? Let him have the message quietly when he is alone."

"Your master is not killed?" one of the women exclaimed in consternation.

"Killed! no; Colonel Drummond is not so easily killed," he replied, scornfully; "I have a letter from him in my

pocket. But he has been somewhat hurt, and it were best that I saw the count first and that he should himself give the letter to the Countess Thirza."

In two or three minutes the man returned and led Karl to a room where the count was awaiting him with a look of great anxiety on his face.

"All is well, your Excellency," Karl said, in answer to the look; "at least, if not altogether well, not so bad as it might be. The colonel was hit at Torgau; a cannon-ball took off his left arm at the elbow. Fortunately there were surgeons at work a quarter of a mile away, and he was in their hands within a very few minutes of being hit, so they made a job of his wound at once. They had not taken the bandages off when I came away, but as there had been no bleeding and no great pain or fever they think it is going on well. They tell him that he will be fit for service, save for his half-empty sleeve, in the spring. Here is a letter for the Countess Thirza. It is not written by his own hand, except as to the signature, for the surgeons insist that he must lie perfectly quiet, for any exertion might cause the wound to break out afresh. He is quite cheerful and in good spirits, as he always is. He bade me give this note into your hands, so that you might prepare the young countess a little before giving it to her."

"'Tis bad news, Karl, but it might have been much worse, and it will indeed be a relief to us all; for since we heard of that desperate fight at Torgau, and how great was the slaughter on both sides, we have been anxious indeed, and must have remained so, for we should have had little chance of seeing the list of the Prussian killed and wounded. Now, do you go into the kitchen; they all know you there; make yourself comfortable. I will give orders that you shall be well served." He then proceeded to the room where Thirza and her mother were sitting; the former was pale and had evidently been crying.

"Some news has come," he said; "not the very best, and yet by no means the worst. Drummond is wounded—a severe wound, but not, it is confidently believed, a dangerous one." Thirza ran to her father and threw her arms round his neck and burst into a passion of tears. He did not attempt to check them for some little time.

"Now, my dear," he said at last, "you must be brave or you won't be worthy of this lover of yours. There is one bad point about it."

She looked up in his face anxiously, but his smile reassured her. "You must prepare yourself for his being somewhat disfigured."

"Oh, that is nothing, father, nothing whatever to me; but how is he disfigured?"

"Well, my dear, he has lost his left arm at the elbow."

Thirza gave a little cry of grief and pity. "That is sad, father, but surely it is no disfigurement any more than that sabre scar on his face. 'Tis an honour to a brave soldier to have lost a limb in battle. Still, I am glad that it is his left arm; though, had it been his right and both his legs it would have made no difference in my love for him."

"Well, I am very glad, Thirza, that your love has not been tested so severely, as I confess that for my part I would much prefer having a son-in-law who was able to walk about, and who would not have to be carried to the altar. Here is a letter to you from him—that is to say, which has been written at his dictation, for, of course, the surgeons insist on his lying perfectly quiet at present." Thirza tore it open and ran through its contents.

"It is just as you say, father; he makes very light of it, and writes as if it were a mere nothing."

She handed the letter to her mother, and then turned to the count.

"Is there anything we can do, father?"

"Nothing whatever. With such a wound as that he will have to lie perfectly still for some time. You may be sure that, as one of Frederick's personal staff, he will have every attention possible, and were we all in the town we could do nothing. As soon as he is fit to be moved it will be different, but we shall have plenty of time to talk over matters before that. For some few months travelling will be dangerous. Frederick's army is in the neighbourhood again, and as Daun and Lacy are both in their intrenchments behind the Plauen, there is no chance of his again besieging Dresden; but his flying columns will be all over the country, as doubtless will the Croats, and the roads will be altogether unsafe for travelling. No doubt, as soon as he is able to be moved, he will be taken to Frederick's head-quarters wherever they may be established. The king will assuredly have the hospitals at Torgau cleared as soon as he can, lest when he has retired the Austrians might make another dash at the town."

The next morning Karl set out again, bearing a letter from the count, and one from Thirza, which was of a much less formal character than that which he had dictated to her, and which, as he told her afterwards, greatly assisted his cure. A month after the battle he was pronounced fit to travel, and with a large train of waggons filled with convalescents, and under a strong escort, he was taken to Leipzig, where the king had just established his head-quarters, and to which all the wounded were to be sent as soon as they could safely be moved. Here he was established in comfortable quarters, and Karl again carried a letter to Thirza. Ten days later Count Eulenfurst entered his room.

"You here, Count!" he exclaimed. "How kind of you. What a journey to make through the snow!"

"I have been dragged hither," the count said, with a smile.

"Dragged hither, Count?"

"Yes; Thirza insisted on coming to see you, her mother declared that she should accompany her, and of course there was nothing for me to do but to set out also."

"Are they here, then, Count?" Fergus exclaimed, incredulously.

"Certainly they are, and established at the Black Eagle Hotel. I could not bring them here to a house full of officers. You are well enough to walk to the hotel?"

"Yes, indeed; I walked a mile yesterday." As Karl was helping Fergus into his uniform he asked, "How long were you in coming here, Count?"

"We did it in a day. I sent on relays of horses two days before, and as the carriage is of course on runners and the snow in good order, we made quick work of it. Your man went on with the horses, and rode with us from the last place where we changed. I did most of the journey sitting by the coachman, which gave them more room inside, and was more pleasant for me also."

In a few minutes they reached the hotel, and the count led Fergus to a door. "You will find Thirza alone there; we thought that you had best see her so at first."

Half an hour later the count and countess entered the room.

"He looks very pale and thin, mother," Thirza said, after the countess had affectionately embraced Fergus.

"You would hardly have expected to find him fat and rosy," the count laughed. "A man does not lose his arm and go about as if the matter was not worth thinking of, a few weeks afterwards. He is certainly looking better than I expected to find him. That empty sleeve is a sad disfigurement though," he added, slyly.

"How can you say so, father?" Thirza exclaimed, indig-

nantly. "I think quite the contrary, and I feel quite proud of him with it."

"Well, there is no accounting for taste, Thirza; if you are satisfied I have no reason to be otherwise. And now, Drummond, we want to hear all about Liegnitz and Torgau, for we have only heard the Austrian accounts. Dresden illuminated over Daun's first despatch from Torgau, saying that the Prussian attacks had been repulsed with tremendous slaughter, and a complete victory gained. The next morning there came, I believe, another despatch, but it was not published, and it was not until we heard that Daun and Lacy were both within a few miles of the town that we knew that somehow or other there had been a mistake about the matter, a mistake that has not yet been cleared up at Dresden."

"The defeat part of the business I can tell you from my personal observation, the victory only from what I heard. Certainly, when I came to my senses, after the surgeons had seen to my wounds, I had no thought of anything but a disastrous defeat. Never did the Prussians fight more bravely or more hopelessly. They had to mount a steep ascent with four hundred cannon playing upon them, and an army more than three times their number waiting at the top to receive them." He then proceeded to tell them the whole story of the battle.

"Ziethen seems to have blundered terribly," the count said.

"I believe that that is the king's opinion too, but Ziethen himself defends his action stoutly, and maintains that he could never have succeeded in a direct attack in broad daylight. Anyhow, as the matter came out all right in the end, the king was too well satisfied to do more than grumble at him. The other was a hard-fought battle too."

"The news of that was a relief to us, indeed," the count said. "It seemed to everyone that Frederick was so com-

pletely caught in the toils that he could not hope to extricate himself. As you know, in this war I have all along held myself to be a neutral. I considered that the plot to overthrow Frederick and partition the kingdom was a scandalous one, and that the king disgraced himself and us by joining in it; but since that time my sympathies have become more and more strongly with Frederick. It is impossible not to admire the manner in which he has defended himself. Moreover, the brutality with which the Confederates and Austrians, wherever their armies penetrated Saxony, treated the Protestants, made one regard him as the champion of Protestantism. He was wrong in forcing the Saxons to take service with him in his army after their surrender at Pirna; and the taxes and exactions have for the last three years weighed heavily on Saxony, but I cannot blame him for that; it was needful that he should have money to carry on the war, and as Saxony had brought it on herself, I could not blame him that he bore heavily upon her. Then, too, Thirza has for the last two or three years become a perfect enthusiast for the Prussians. Whether it was the king's gracious manner to herself, or from some other cause, I cannot say, but she has certainly become an ultra-Prussian. And now lunch must be ready, and you look as if you wanted it, Drummond, and I am sure Thirza does. She was too excited to eat supper when we got here last night, and as for her breakfast it was altogether untouched."

"No doubt you think, Drummond," Count Eulenfurst said, when he called the next morning, "that you have done your duty fairly to Prussia."

"How do you mean, Count?" Fergus replied, somewhat puzzled by the question.

"I mean that you have served five campaigns, you have been twice made a prisoner, you were wounded at Zorndorf,

you nearly died of fever last winter, now you have lost your arm at Torgau; so I think that you have fully done your duty to the king under whom you took service, and could now retire with a thoroughly clear conscience. My own idea is that the war has quite spent its strength. France is practically bankrupt, Austria and Russia must be as tired of the war as Prussia, and this last defeat of their hopes cannot but discourage the two empresses greatly. I hear from my friends in Vienna that in the capital and all the large cities they are becoming absolutely disgusted with the war, and though it may go on for a while, I believe that its fury is spent. At any rate, I think you have earned a right to think of yourself as well as others. You certainly have nothing to gain by staying longer in the service."

"I was thinking the same last night, Count. Certainly one man more or less will make no difference to Frederick; but I thought that unless you spoke of it I should let matters go on as they are, except that I thought of asking for three months' leave to go home."

"That you should go home for a few months is an excellent plan, Drummond; but I think it would be better that, when you were there, you should be able to stay five or six months if so inclined. Go to the king, tell him frankly that you feel that you want rest and quiet for a time, that you have no longer any occasion in the pecuniary way for remaining in the army, and that you want to get married—all good reasons for resigning a commission. You see we have now some sort of right to have a voice in the matter. You had a narrow escape at Torgau, and next time you might not be so fortunate, and, anxious as we are for Thirza's happiness, we do think it is high time that you retired from the service."

"That decides it, Count. I myself have had quite enough of this terrible work. Were I a Prussian, I should owe my

first duty to the country, and as long as the war continued should feel myself bound to set aside all private considerations to defend her to the last; but it is not so, and my first duty now is assuredly to Thirza, to you, and to the countess. Therefore I will this morning go to the king and ask him to allow me to resign my commission."

"Do so, Drummond. I thought of saying as much to you last year, but the anxiety of those terrible three or four days after Torgau decided me. If I thought that your honour was concerned in remaining longer in the army, I should be the last to advise you to leave it, even for the sake of my daughter's happiness, but as it is not so, I have no hesitation in urging you to retire."

"'Tis a good time for me to leave now. My cousin, the Earl Marischal Keith, returned here three days ago, and I will get him to go with me to the king."

"I shall say nothing to my wife and Thirza about it till I see you again, Drummond. Of course the king cannot refuse, but I should like him to take it in good part, as indeed I doubt not that he will."

"I have no doubt that he will, too, Count. You may think it absurd and perhaps vain of me, but indeed it is of the king that I am thinking rather than of myself. During the past three years he has been good enough to treat me with singular kindness. He has had trouble and care which would have broken down most men, and I think that it has been some relief to him to put aside his cares and troubles for an hour or two of an evening, and to talk to a young fellow like myself on all sorts of matters, just as he does to Sir John Mitchell and my cousin, the Earl Marischal."

"I have no doubt of it, Drummond; and I quite understand your feeling in the matter; still, we are selfish enough to think of our feelings too."

As soon as the count left, Fergus put on his full uniform and went to the king's quarters. He first saw the Earl Marischal and told him his errand.

"You are quite right," the old man said, heartily. "You have done more than enough fighting, and there is no saying how long this war may drag on. I told you when I first heard of your engagement to the young countess, that I was glad indeed that you were not always to remain a soldier of fortune, and I am sure that the king will consider that you have more than done your duty by remaining in his service for a year after having so splendid a prospect before you. Frederick is disengaged at present, and I will go over with you to him and will myself open the matter."

Fergus had not seen the king since his arrival at Leipzig.

"I am truly glad to see you on your feet again," the latter said, as Fergus followed his cousin into the room. "I felt by no means sure that I should ever see you again on that day after Torgau, but you still look very thin and pulled down. You want rest, lad; we all want rest, but it is not all of us that can get it."

"That is what he has come to speak to you about, your Majesty," Keith said. "I told you a year ago that he was engaged to be married to the daughter of Count Eulenfurst."

The king nodded. "I remember her, the bright little lady who received me when I went to her father's house."

"The same, sire. He thinks that the warning he had at Torgau was sufficient, and that, having done his best in your Majesty's cause, he has now earned a right to think of himself and her, and so he would beg your Majesty to allow him to resign his commission and to retire from the service."

"He has certainly well earned the right," the king said, gravely. "He has done me right good and loyal service, even putting aside that business at Zorndorf; and not the least of

those services has been that he has often cheered me by his talk when I sorely needed cheering. That empty sleeve of his, that scar won at Zorndorf, are all proofs of how well he has done his duty, and his request, now that fortune has smiled upon him in other ways, is a fair and reasonable one. I hope, Colonel Drummond," he went on, in a lighter tone, "that, as you will be settled in Saxony—and this war cannot go on forever—I shall some day see you and your bride at Berlin. None will be more welcome."

"He is going home to Scotland for a few months in the first place," Keith said. "It is only right that he should visit his mother and people there before he settles here. He will, like enough, be back again before the campaign opens in the spring."

Fergus, whose heart was very full, said a few words of thanks to the king for the kindness that he had always shown him and for what he had now said, and assured him that he should not only come to Berlin as soon as peace was made, but that as long as the war lasted he would pay his respects to him every year when he was in winter quarters; he then withdrew and made his way to the hotel.

"It is done," he said to the count as he entered. "I have resigned my commission, and the king has accepted it. He was most kind. I am glad that I have done it, and yet it was a very hard thing to do."

Thirza uttered an exclamation of joy. "I am glad, indeed, Fergus, that you are not going to that terrible war again."

"I can understand your feelings, Drummond," the count said, putting his hand upon his shoulder. "I know that it must have been a wrench to you, but that will pass off in a short time. You have done your duty nobly, and have fairly earned a rest. Now let us talk of other things. When do you think of starting for Scotland?"

"To that I must reply," Fergus said, with a smile. "How long are you thinking of stopping here? Assuredly I shall not want to be going as long as you are here. And in any case I should like my mother to have a week's notice before I come home, and I think that in another fortnight my wound will be completely healed."

"I was thinking," the count said, "that you will want to take a nurse with you."

"Do you mean, Count," Fergus exclaimed, eagerly, "that Thirza could go with me? That would be happiness indeed."

"I don't quite see why she should not, Drummond. There are churches here and clergymen. What do you say, Thirza?"

"Oh, father," the girl said, with a greatly heightened colour, "I could never be ready so soon as that! Could I, mother?"

"I don't know, my dear. Your father was talking to me an hour ago about it, and that was what I said; but he answered that, although you might not be able to get a great many clothes made, there will be plenty of time to get your things from home, and that in some respects it would be much more convenient for you to be married here than at Dresden. Your marriage with one who had so lately left the service of Prussia would hardly be a popular one with the Austrians in Dresden. So that, altogether, the plan would be convenient. We can set the milliners to work at once, and in another fortnight get your bridal dress ready, and such things as are absolutely necessary. Of course, if you would rather remain single for another three or four months, your father and I would not wish to press you unduly."

"It is not that, mother," she said, shyly, "but it does seem so very quick."

"If a thing is good the sooner it is done the better," the count said, and Thirza offered no further objection. The next

day an order appeared that Colonel Fergus Drummond had been advanced another step in the order of the Black Eagle, following which came:

Colonel Fergus Drummond having lost an arm at the battle of Torgau, has resigned his commission, which has been accepted with great regret by the king, the services of Colonel Drummond having been in the highest degree meritorious and distinguished.

The king having heard from the Earl Marischal that Fergus was to be married at Leipzig before leaving for Scotland, took great interest in the matter, and when the time came was himself present in the cathedral, together with a brilliant gathering of generals and other officers of the army in the vicinity, and of many Saxon families of distinction who were acquainted with Count Eulenfurst. Fergus had obtained Karl's discharge from the army, the latter, who had long since served his full time, having begged most earnestly to remain in his service.

On the following day Fergus started with his wife for Scotland, drove to Magdeburg, and four days later reached Hamburg, where they embarked on board a ship for Edinburgh, Karl of course accompanying them. It was a day to be long remembered in the glen when Colonel Drummond and his Saxon wife came to take possession of his father's estates, where his mother had now been established for upwards of a year, in the old mansion.

It was late when they arrived. A body of mounted men with torches met them at the boundary of the estate, and accompanied them to the house, where all the tenants and clansmen were assembled. Great bonfires blazed, and scores of torches added to the picturesque effect. A party of pipers

struck up an air of welcome as they drove forward, and a roar of cheering and shouts of welcome greeted them.

"Welcome to your Scottish home," Fergus said to his wife. "'Tis a poor place in comparison with your father's, but nowhere in the world will you find truer hearts and a warmer greeting than here."

His mother was standing on the steps as he leapt out, and she embraced him with tears of joy, while after him she gave a warm and affectionate greeting to Thirza. Then Fergus turned to the clansmen who stood thronging round the entrance, with waving torches and bonnets thrown wildly in the air, and said a few words of thanks for their welcome, and of the pleasure and pride he felt in coming again among them as the head of the clan, and master of his father's estates. Then he presented Thirza to them as their mistress.

"She has brought me another home across the sea," he said, "but she will soon come to love this as well as her own; and though I shall be absent part of the time, she will come with me every summer to stay among you, and will regard you as her people as well as mine."

Among the dependents ranged in the hall was Wulf, with whom Fergus shook hands warmly.

"I should never have got on as well as I have, Wulf," he said, "had it not been for your teaching, both in German and in arms. I commend to your special care my servant Karl, who speaks no English, and will feel strange here at first. He has been my companion all this time, has given me most faithful service, and has saved my life more than once; he has now left the army to follow me."

Fergus remained three months at home. Thirza was delighted with the country and the affection shown by the people to Fergus, and studied diligently to learn the language, that she might be able to communicate personally with them, and

above all with Mrs. Drummond, to whom she speedily became much attached. At the end of April they returned to Saxony, and took up their abode on the estate the count had settled on them at their marriage.

For two years longer the war continued, but with much diminished fury, and there was no great battle fought. The king planted himself in a camp which he rendered impregnable, and there menacing the routes by which the Saxon and Russian armies brought their supplies from Bohemia, paralysed their movements, while General Platen made a raid into Poland and destroyed a great portion of the Russian magazines in that direction, so that the campaign came to naught. Ferdinand, with the aid of his English, defeated Broglio and Soubise at Villingshausen, Soubise remaining inactive during the battle, as Broglio had done at Minden.

At the beginning of 1762 a happy event for the king took place. The Empress of Russia died, and Peter, a great admirer of Frederick, came to the throne. The Prussian king at once released all the Russian prisoners and sent them back, and Peter returned the compliment by sending home the Prussian prisoners, and six weeks after his accession issued a declaration that there ought to be peace with the King of Prussia, and that the czar was resolved that the war should be ended; he at once gave up East Prussia and other conquests, and recalled the Russian army. He not only did this, but he ordered his General Czernichef to march and join the king. The news caused absolute dismay in Austria, and hastened the Swedes to conclude a peace with Frederick. They had throughout the war done little, but the peace set free the force that had been watching them, and which had regularly every year driven them back as fast as they endeavoured to invade Prussia on that side.

In July, however, the murder of Peter threw all into con-

fusion again; but Catherine had no desire to renew the war, and it was evident that this was approaching its end. She therefore recalled her army, which had already joined that of the king. England and France too were negotiating terms of peace, and it was clear that Austria single-handed could not hope to win back Silesia. The king gained several small but important successes, and recaptured the important fortress of Schweidnitz. Then came long negotiations, and on the following February a general peace was signed by all the Powers, Prussia retaining her frontiers as at the beginning of the war.

From this time Fergus Drummond's life passed uneventfully. Every year he went to his old home with his wife, and as time went on brought his children to Scotland, and every winter he spent a fortnight at Berlin. When his second son reached the age of twelve he sent him to school in England, and there prepared him to succeed to the Scottish estate. This he did not do for many years, entering the British army and winning the rank of colonel in the Peninsular War, and it was not until some years after the battle of Waterloo that, at the death of his father, he retired and settled down on the Scottish estates that were now his. The rest of Colonel Drummond's family took their mother's nationality.

Fergus did not come in for the whole of the Eulenfurst estates until thirty years after his marriage. He then took up his abode with his wife at the mansion where they had first met near Dresden, and retaining a sufficient share of the estates to support his position, divided the remainder among his children, considering that the property was too large to be owned with advantage by any one person. His descendants are still large land-owners in various parts of Saxony.

The king survived the signature of the peace for twenty-five years, during which he devoted himself to repairing the damage his country had suffered by the war, and by incessant care

and wise reforms he succeeded in rendering Prussia far wealthier and more prosperous than it had been when he succeeded to the throne. Lindsay rose to the rank of general in the Prussian service, and his friendship with Fergus remained close and unbroken. The old Earl Marischal survived his younger brother for twenty years, and was to the last one of the king's dearest and most intimate friends.

THE END

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